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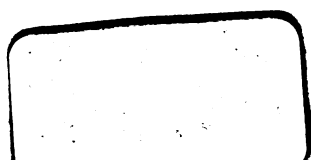
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THE
VILLAGE
OF
MARIENDORPT.
A TALE.

BY
MISS ANNA MARIA PORTER,
AUTHOR OF THE FAST OF ST. MAGDALEN, KNIGHT OF ST. JOHN,
&c. &c. &c.

My son! My son!
Do I behold thy face? Oh, fold thine arms
Around me, clasp me to thy bosom, lean
Thy cheek 'gainst my fond cheek, and shade my breast
With the thick ringlets of thy clustering hair!

What shall I say to thee, — how tell thee all?
POTTER'S *Euripides*.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE
VILLAGE
OF
MARIENDORPT.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Meeta saw Rupert again, it was after his return from Mr. Vanderhoven's, whither he had gone with Aremberg, to appease the trouble of Father Joachim, at the prospect of new inmates. Happily Madame Roselheim was not present.

Meeta was standing in the centre of the parlour, resting her fatigued spirits on one object of thought, for hitherto many had distracted them, — when she heard the approaching voices of her

father and Rupert : as though the nature of her sad reverie might be guessed at, from her very position, she ran to a seat, and began working upon some lace which she had destined long ago, for one of those falling collars then worn by young men, instead of the stiffer ruff; and had purposed making a farewell present of, to her adopted brother. Haste and confusion painted her face with its liveliest carnations, and her heart beat so violently, that it made her hands tremulous : but when she heard her father turn back in the passage, and Rupert about to enter the room alone, the blood all at once deserted her cheeks, and an icy-coldness took possession of her whole frame. Unlike her usual habit, she did not turn round to welcome him as he entered. After waiting a moment or two for such notice, yet not advancing, Rupert said with his customary cheerfulness,

“ You are wonderously busy with those

lace-bobbins, Meeta; what is it you are making?"

He had to repeat his question before Meeta found voice to answer. "A little present for — Mr. Aremberg, I think I intend it for" —

"You cannot employ those pretty fingers for a better person, or a truer friend!" was Rupert's frank exclamation, coming up to her, and examining her manufacture; then re-commencing with a little archness, "I hope you are not in his uncle's plot against my poor friend's heart! or that if you are, you mean to be honest with him: — to take, and give, Meeta?"

"I don't understand you!" exclaimed Meeta, with real unconsciousness of his meaning, yet averting her head with a confusion that seemed to say otherwise.

"Come, come, don't affect ignorance;" resumed Rupert, in the same light strain; "Mr. Vanderhoven's wish is pretty obvious; and if I were not silly enough to like

my friend all the better for his constancy to the memory of poor Eustatia, I should wish the same for him too — of course. But what is the matter, you are so pale?" he added, catching a full view of her face, "I thought nothing could rob you of your colour. Has any thing happened to distress you, dearest Meeta!" His voice all at once changed from a tone of careless gaiety, to one of the extremest tenderness, and he took her hand, while speaking, with a manner which might be that of a fond brother; — but to Meeta, at this thrilling instant, it seemed more than that. Not daring to encounter his eyes, which she felt were now fixed with concern and surprise upon the vanishing apparitions of her complexion, she snatched a hyacinth out of her breast, saying she was foolish to wear a flower that was notorious for giving sick head-aches.

A silence of a few seconds ensued: of what nature Rupert's thoughts were,

while he noticed the extraordinary fluctuations of her colour, perhaps he could not have defined himself; but *her* feelings were distinct and unmixed. She could not bear that Rupert should fancy it possible for her ever to love another than him; yet would she have shrunk with horror from the assurance that such a feeling implied a desire that he should know she was indifferent to all men for his sake.

After some ineffectual efforts to break their embarrassing silence, she was at last able to say, "she hoped he would believe that she admired constancy to a first attachment, as much as he could do, and that Mr. Aremberg was therefore the last person she should wish to attract."

Rupert who was still holding the hand he had taken, felt it tremble so, as it now struggled out of his, and saw the colour so completely disappear from her very lips, that he fancied he had utterly

mistaken the nature of her regard for his friend, and he began therefore to say something that might efface the discouraging impression made by his last words. Some of his own composure vanished while doing this; and he sought in vain for the phrases proper to revive Meeta's hopes, without exciting in her the fear of having such hopes guessed at.

Whatever he did say, was not what he ought to have said; nor indeed was it spoken, as the disinterested friend of both parties might have been expected to speak. Meeta's trepidation increased with this appearance of disturbance in him; and, ere she was aware, she found that she had uttered so strong a protest against having any design whatever upon the heart of Aremberg, that Rupert's hasty alarm evidently ceased, and the light of some powerful expressions shone so suddenly and so brightly in his countenance, that she felt she ought to turn

her eyes from it now, and her thoughts from it hereafter. The gentle countenance of Madame Roselheim seemed at that instant to interpose itself between them, reproaching her by the tears in which it was bathed, for this guilty thrill of love's first belief of full return. Meeta was in despair at her own feebleness; but forcibly rallying her powers, and affecting vivacity, she said, laughing,

“After this impertinent protest, you may be sure Cupid will have his revenge, and I shall be punished for my indifference to Mr. Aremberg's, by falling in love with some handsome fool, or polished knave. But here I stay talking nonsense to you, when I have a hundred useful things to do elsewhere; so I commend you to your own good company till we meet again.” So saying, with the same wretched air of levity she had assumed at the beginning of her speech, she flew away, with a heart to which that of a condemned wretch is

light and joyous, and a head, that would have welcomed the sentence which was to strike and end its throbbing pain.

Meeta did not leave Rupert, for the sake of indulging in vain and culpable emotions of pleasure. If the speaking illumination of a single look were to be trusted, she felt that he was not unmoved by the assurance of her sentiments towards his friend : yet the lively satisfaction he evinced, might arise solely from his avowed respect for every proof of constancy of character. To her cooler reason, that seemed the real case, but why then was there such unusual tenderness in his look ? Why did his eye, as it fixed upon her in wistful observation, melt into an expression she had never seen there before ? But *was* such an expression there ? or was it fancied ? Meeta blushed at her presumptuous folly, which had too surely given the colour of its own wishes, to what was in reality of a different hue ; and conscious, from this momentary

throb of transport, how fatal the admission of the smallest hope would prove to her well-principled determination, she resolutely refused to hear, or to look on it again.

After this day, she was indeed completely mistress of herself; perhaps a salutary pride, better termed delicacy, enabled her to command the feeling she could not as yet extirpate, (for nothing in Rupert revived the recollection of his momentary emotion,) and even Madame Roselheim's solicitously-observing eye could but dimly perceive through her admirable veil of animated interest in the preparations for Adolpha's reception, the ceaseless struggles of regret and reason.

Rupert's invariable kindness, from its openness and calmness, assisted Meeta's laudable effort of self-government; so that perpetually refreshed in mental strength, by the conviction that his affection for her was purely of a brotherly sort, she was so guarded in his presence,

as to deceive the penetration of Madame Roselheim, and make her hope that the spark she had timely trodden out, had indeed been but a spark.

Madame Roselheim, in truth, needed no additional sources of anxiety. She had those of her son's health, and consequent delay of promotion ; her longing to ascertain the nature and degree of his hopes about Adolpha ; and her own sickening desire for Julian's restoration to his parents. Every day rendered that interesting child more dear to her. When he should leave them, she was conscious that both she and Rupert would feel as though a limb were torn from them : since once removed, once separate, all intercourse must cease between the brothers. It were better, therefore, that the little creature should depart, ere he had taught her quite to forget that any blood mingled in his veins with that of Rhinegravestein. His tender age, his winning caresses, his gentle sports were

too consonant with her own tastes, not to steal upon her affection with a charm which softened her abhorrence of the mother that gave him birth ; and, she justly thought, blameably softened it. Often did she condemn herself for the tears which certain remembrances drew from her eyes, whenever she was left alone after a visit from Julian. She believed that, were this object removed, her thoughts would return into their proper channel, and that she would cease to feel regrets, which degraded her in her own estimation : indulgent to all the world, Madame Roselheim was severe to herself.

But of Julian's exchange there yet seemed to her no prospect. Neither letter nor message was come from the Swedish commanders on this subject ; and Father Joachim had received but one from his illustrious patron, written on the receipt of his, by the travelling friar.

All that he communicated generally

of this epistle was, that the Count was earnestly labouring at the exchange of his son, in extreme trouble of spirit at the obstacles opposed to it; and that he had transmitted an unlimited order for money to the Franciscan, for the latter to distribute at will, amongst those who were kind to the little Julian.

“ I hope,” said Aremberg, to whom alone Father Joachim thought it best to impart this passage of his letter, “ I hope that Rupert is not to know that his father thinks it possible for him, who refused an equivalent for the child’s ransom from hands he respected, that he could or would accept —”

“ My Lord of Rhinegravestein,” interrupted the Franciscan, with some emotion, “ does justice, — to you, excellent Sir, I may say *weeping* justice to that young man’s best qualities. He has long put a constraint upon his own feelings, out of respect for his. Would to God they were not at variance! I am sure

my Lord wishes the friends of Rupert to know, that from the hour in which he discovered the youth's situation with the Swedish army, he longed to supply him with the means of honourable living ; but he felt that such a character would ill brook any overtures of the kind from the parent whom he thought it right to desert, and with a grieved heart my Lord withheld his bounty."

" I thank you for this explanation," said Aremberg, pressing Joachim's hand, although the latter, afraid of further questioning, had drawn back into coldness ; " for the honour of human nature, I am glad the Count of Rhinegravestein knows how to respect the virtues he fails to practise ; and I am sure the information that he does, will sweeten the bitter remembrances of his excellent son."

" That son will remember also, I hope," said the Franciscan, drily, " that it was in the power of that father to enforce his return to him by authority, or

to obtain it by secret measures; that, above all, he had the right to insist upon his abdication of his name; and that he did none of those things."

"Enforcing one would have rendered the others nugatory," returned Aremberg, somewhat contemptuously; "if the Count of Rhinegravestein still pretends to a father's authority, he cannot dispense with the obligation to give his son a home and a station. I cannot, therefore, own my friend obliged in this case."

"Yes, Sir, even you must have owned that he owed much to his father's tenderness, had you witnessed the domestic storm that followed the first information of his continuing to bear that name — the Countess — But I am wrong, I ought not to go thus far." The Franciscan broke off in extreme disorder; and, crossing himself several times with great fervour and contrition, walked apart for a few moments.

Those moments gave Aremberg time to recollect himself ; and, justly picturing the proud wrath of the Countess, and the stinging remorse of her husband, he acknowledged internally, that there was some virtue in the latter's resistance to her violence.

The Franciscan approached him once more, with increased emotion. " You affected *me* greatly, Sir, by telling me the other day what I had never known, that our brave young friend refused promotion and money too, from his own superiors, when they showed him their right to insist upon the detention of his prisoners ;—that was a proof of nobleness beyond all doubting. I hope to move *you* by this fact — that the Count of Rhinegravestein mortified his paternal yearnings after the son, whom, I scruple not to say, he felt proud of, and refrained from either sending to him, or making too minute enquiries concerning him, lest any intercourse with himself

might subject the latter to political suspicions, and so stain his military good faith, and obstruct his advancement. As Jesu is my witness, I declare this consideration influenced, and deterred him, when he would have sent his son a valuable and splendid sword, that he had caused to be made on purpose for him, after hearing of the exploit which first led him to take arms."

"That was worthy, — creditable to the Count," returned Aremberg; "he seems to have nice sensibilities. What a pity that his better qualities were not more stable! These sensibilities are his injured lady's avenging ministers; but *she* would bless rather than curse. Surely, Father, now that you know this eminently-virtuous woman, you cannot but esteem the son, who abandoned his worldly interest to wed himself to her sad destiny! I regard you too highly not to believe that you condemn the action that made them both outcasts."

“It is not mine to judge!” answered the Franciscan, trying to retreat within himself once more; “at least my sentiments on the conduct of the Count Rhinegravestein belong only to God and him. I knew him not in his days of domestic happiness and subsequent trouble, therefore my opinion was not called for; others directed his conscience — doubtless, faithfully; — I hope rightly. What he did, had the seal of the Court of Rome: both his spiritual lord and his temporal lord sanctified that act, which his son presumes to think wholly released him from his duty to one parent, and gave him all to the other. Thus the voice of our holy church not only absolves but applauds.”

“But what says the voice of Nature? What says the voice of conscience to the Count himself?” exclaimed Aremberg impetuously. “An innocent son cut off from long-admitted rights — a virtuous wife stripped of her rank, her home, nay, of the very means of life,

and thrown at once into the class of women abhorrent to name! Yet, had he not married another, even I could have allowed, that superstitious—"Aremberg checked himself; beseeching pardon for the indelicacy into which he had suffered himself to be hurried, and confessing that he had thus ill-repaid the Franciscan's voluntary confidence.

Touched by this honourable humiliation, Father Joachim's grey eye glistened, as he replied, "You have my pardon. Since I have lived amongst you, I have learned to pardon many things, and to approve some, which I fancied it impossible for me to do: this amongst the rest. I will go further even than this; and say to you, that so far from approving a second marriage, after a divorce like that of my Lord Rhinegravestein's, I lament it in sackcloth and ashes. Had it pleased God to have made *me* the guide of my lord's disturbed conscience at that time—"Aremberg smiled rather scep-

tically at the phrase — disturbed conscience. The Franciscan went on without remarking it — “ I would have shown him, that it was safer and better to expiate the offence of his first unhallowed nuptials, either by complete devotedness to public duties, or by becoming such as I am, dedicated to heaven, and mortified to all human affections : far, far better than to render his pious remorse suspected, and have it made a reproach and a mocking amongst the enemies of the true faith ; far better, than to have thus heaped additional sorrow upon the wife and son, already grieved sufficiently ; and to whom, seeing as I see them, I cannot refuse respect and compassion — O ! that ye were all of our blessed fold ! ”

“ We *shall* be of one fold, under one shepherd, not long hence ! ” exclaimed Aremberg, greatly moved by this first distinct view of the Franciscan’s best feelings, “ in another world, the jarring opinions of this, will cease : every error of

doctrine will be forgiven, to the sincere aspirant after truth ; and not they who have cried, Lord, Lord, but they who have done the will of the Father will find acceptance and blessedness for evermore. May I be found worthy to go where you will be at the great day of resurrection !” he added, giving the good monk’s hand an affectionate and earnest pressure.

“ Pray Jesu thou may’st !” returned Joachim, and the fervent manner with which he said this, might have caused another to smile at the seeming *naïve* vanity of the exclamation. Aremberg read it aright ; and knew that it belonged to the Franciscan’s confidence in his superior doctrines, not to any presumptuous notion of his own excellence. He would fain have asked him a few questions concerning the state of Rhine-gravestein’s feelings towards his deserted wife. He longed to know whether the Count cherished regret and tenderness for her — whether he really preferred her

younger rival — whether it had ever cost him pain to remain ignorant of her existence and fate? — He would fain also have dived a little deeper into the character of the present countess; but respecting the situation of Joachim, and honoring his integrity, he forbore to indulge this desire, and suffered him to depart without further questioning.

CHAP. II.

QUITE late in the fourth day, after the arrival of Madame Krazau's letter, one of her servants rode into Mariendorpt, and while enquiring the way to Mr. Vanderhoven's, was seen by Rupert, who had known him at Rendsburg. Having given him the requisite directions, and learnt that his lady's carriage was not far behind, Rupert hastened to the Parsonage for his mother, who had wished, but scarcely hoped, an opportunity of knowing the exact time of her young cousin's approach, that she might be at Mr. Vanderhoven's to give her welcome.

In the haste of getting away with her son, Madame Roselheim had not leisure for any observation of Meeta's countenance ; but she felt the poor girl's hands

tremble, as she was assisting her with her cloak ; and she heard that her voice faltered, as she replied to Rupert's animated desire, that she and her father would not fail to follow them, when sufficient time were passed for his mother and Mr. Vanderhoven to make acquaintance with his Danish friends.

He disappeared as he spoke, and with such animation of manner, that Meeta thought he seemed treading on air. She would have thought too, what a mixed surprize of pain and pleasure was awaiting Adolpha, who would indeed see the person she loved again, and unexpectedly, but see him wounded and suffering ; she crushed the rising thoughts, however, and refusing herself the indulgence even of despairing meditations upon this forbidden subject, courageously turned to her father, and asked him with a smiling lip, whether they had not best amuse away their impatience to see the travellers, by pursuing the study of a book

they had commenced together some days before ?

The work in question, was one of English history, which Muhldenau elucidated as they went along, by occasional references to private memoirs of the same period. Meeta and he had been consulting these different authors in the little summer-room by the water-side, and the volumes being left there, they now went thither in search of them.

As Meeta walked down their verdant garden by the side of this indulgent father, listening to his benevolent expressions of pleasure at the arrival of persons so interesting to Madame Rosenheim as Madame Krazau and her young companion ; as her half-tearful eye remarked the tempered happiness of his, her heart smote her, not for cherishing the feeling which oppressed it, but for the mere existence of that feeling.

“ What under Heaven ought I to love or desire, except this father — this dear

father? — she asked herself, as she regarded his placidly-pensive aspect, —“ O why has my heart room for any other affection than what I feel for him? ”

At that moment Meeta fancied every other affection, at least every dangerous one — annihilated in her breast; so intense was the tenderness with which she recalled the days of her childhood, during which this dear parent was her all of life; days, when his fond cares supplied to her the place of the mother she knew only by his description, and learned to love principally from his tears. She remembered the sad history to which she had listened on her fourteenth birth-day, and that filial transport with which she had inwardly vowed to devote all her future years, to the duty and delight of rendering his remaining ones happier than those of which he then spoke.

And was it she, then, who was permitting the acquaintance of a day, (for such Rupert might be considered, when

compared with a parent,) to embitter the peace of her youth, to overcast its fairest prospects, and to defeat her most sacred purpose?

Meeta justly believed, that to conceal her heart's vain desire from her father's knowledge, was not sufficient to preserve his tranquillity unimpaired : she must utterly extirpate that desire ; otherwise, the canker, eating into the bud, would soon reach the parent stem.

Her eyes, now floating in tears at once bitter and sweet, she looked up to Heaven, inwardly asking thence the grace and guidance she required. She *did* require them : for now was she about to act, and to suffer, without seeking either the counsel or sympathy of her two earliest friends. The Comforter she sought, heard this silent petition ; for a sudden composure spread over her thoughts, and she entered the summer-room, if not with a cheerful spirit, at least with a resigned one.

The books sought, were found lying where they were left the day before, and Muhldenau immediately placed himself beside the table where they lay.

The evening was peculiarly beautiful; and as his daughter read aloud, the soft rustling of the jessamines round and above the little building, mixed pleasingly with the trickling of the water flowing past it, and with the silver tones of her youthful voice. Where they were placed, nothing could be seen from the open window, but the surface of the canal itself, reflecting the rainbow-colouring of an evening sky, and the tall trees on the opposite bank. A continuous hum of distant voices, joined to the clatter of wooden shoes, proclaimed some village festival going on across the water; and to Muhldenau, who believed the amusements of his parishioners truly innocent, these sounds of their merriment thus softened were not unpleasant. He went on, without disturbance, ex-

plaining to his daughter, and commenting on what he explained, with his usual placidity.

The shades of evening fell suddenly, or rather appeared to do so, after the gorgeous retinue of clouds waiting on the sun's setting, had passed away. It was soon too dark for Muhldenau to refer with ease to his books, although Meeta could have continued reading by the light of the risen moon : — he put them aside.

“ We have staid our full time, I think, my child,” he said ; “ we may now go, and make acquaintance with these newcomers at Mr. Vanderhoven's.

Meeta felt a cold thrill run through her veins, at words which brought back at once the painful images she had banished by laborious efforts. Rupert, in the society of the woman he loved, was the object she was about to see ; and the acute pang such an imagination brought with it, gave her sad warning of what

the reality would prove. She felt that filial affection was no longer all-sufficient for her heart ; that its peace was destroyed for ever.

Without replying to her father, she began hastily collecting the scattered books, as if afraid to lose the little fortitude she yet retained, by delaying the dreaded interview.

As Muhldenau assisted her, a written paper fell out from one of the volumes : he took it up, and first glancing over it, then paused and looked at it, till tears gathered in his eyes. The moonbeams, as they shone on him, gave a holier character to those tears.

“ Something affects you, dear father,” observed Meeta, wistfully regarding his quivering features.

“ Only some silly lines of my own writing, my child !” he replied, passing his hand across his face, and smiling as she took them from him by gentle force. She cast her eyes over the discoloured

and blotted paper, and saw the following careless attempt at a sonnet : —

Will e'er the time arrive, when, as the wind,
Of shrill November sweeps my casement by,
While heavy rain is to that drear sound joined,
And social faces draw the warm hearth nigh,
I shall arouse the fire by frost refined,
Thinking but careless things ? — ah no ! the sigh,
Repeating still where my lost treasures lie,
Shall bid within the heart, where they are shrin'd,
That sudden throb of local pleasure die !
In memory linked with each domestic joy !
With all that charms the sense, and lifts the mind ;
With those, whom here I never more shall find —
O'er this sad head, past Times, will shrieking fly,
And my thrilled soul of happier hearths remind. —

“ Silly, dear Sir ! ” Meeta exclaimed, after having read this effusion, repeating her father's own phrase.

“ Yes, my child,” he replied seriously ; “ for is it not silly in us to contemplate a life, which is eternally changing its events, as made up of unchanged feelings ? — That gracious God who has placed us in this scene of trial, has mercifully ordained, that time shall soften

every affliction ; and that as years roll on, they shall remove us and our sorrows, further from each other. Were it not the case, all our usefulness would infallibly be wrecked by selfish regrets, and selfish pity. At the period in which I wrote these lines, my Meeta, my heart was full of thy mother, thy sister, my lost prince, his royal father, and many, many a patriot companion endeared by mutual suffering for the same cause. I think I say in them, that no dismal blasts shall howl round my dwelling, without reviving their dear remembrances. Now I know, my child, that many an inclement night my thoughts have been completely engaged by some poor parishioner, whom I knew to be out in it, alone, by land or by water, with a wife and family to whom his safe return was bread and happiness both. And how many times also, have I not forgotten that I had any thing to lament, when sitting with thee,

and our dear Madame, by our own smiling stove !”

“Often may it be so again, dearest father !” Meeta exclaimed, fervently, kissing his hand, and thinking many things she durst not utter : “Yet I would not wish you wholly to forget former times.”

“Non would I — nor can I, alas !” rejoined the pious Muhldenau, smothering a sigh : — “I but seek to call thy attention, my child, to this important truth ; — that every remembrance decays in the human heart, except that of our good or bad deeds. In all concerns of life, therefore, fear no lasting grief, unless thou hast disgraced thyself by a wilfully-base action, or stained thy soul with deliberate guilt. Be the existing pang enough for thee ; imagine not its constant renewal ; and above all things, my child, remember that there is no merit in being miserable. Indifference to the loss of estimable

friends, or to the destruction of virtuous hopes, is as blameable, as inordinate lamentation upon such occasions, and perhaps is the sign of a worse nature : it has ever seemed to me part of our duty to feel the trials and chastisements with which it pleases Heaven to winnow us ; and, wrong therefore, to harden ourselves against them. I should humbly conjecture, that the true measure of grief for the loss of worldly blessings, is just that which may wean us from mere pleasures, yet leave us the power of fulfilling our remaining duties, and of enjoying the performance of them : — if we grieve beyond this, we sin.”

As Muhldenau ceased to speak, he fixed a contemplative look upon the ground : but Meeta’s eyes remained riveted upon his face, as though she would fain have looked into his very heart. The words he spoke, seemed dictated either by a discovery of her secret grief, or inspired by her good angel. Which-

ever it was, the words were sacred to her; and, recovering from the trance of soul into which they had thrown her, she once more kissed his hand, and praying never to forget the lesson he had just taught her, prepared to quit the summer-room.

The lesson had been purely accidental; Muhldenau, therefore, drew her arm calmly within his, and began his walk to Mr. Vanderhoven's. The distance between the two houses was an easy one; and the way lying up the mall on one side of the canal, and just across the flying-bridge to the other, the father and daughter were regaled with the smell of the full-blossomed lymes, as they went along, and lighted by the beautiful moon.

She was now most beautiful! the yellow glow that belongs to her rising, had been gradually softening as she ascended, into a paler and paler hue, till at length it whitened into perfect silver;

then brightened still more; and at last assumed that transparent splendour, to which silver itself is dark and heavy.

Her progress, at first, lay through light fleecy clouds, which she tinted with something of a faint and silvery green; but soon she left these clouds behind, and as they dissolved into ether, her crystal lamp was alone seen, suspended from the blue vault of heaven, and shining on the clear surface of the canal. There, no other object was visible, except the visionary reflections of its trees, under whose broad branches the darkened path along the bank, and the deep shadows resting there, formed a striking contrast with the openness and brilliancy of the water.

There was a mixture of loveliness and solemnity in this night-scene, which was eminently adapted to compose the spirits, and wing the soul to a sphere far beyond that of its own immediate wishes and regrets. Meeta felt its bless-

ed influence : what she had so lately been listening to, fortified her against the trial she was about to encounter ; and she now hung on her father's arm, with so many secret prayers for blessings on his honoured head, and so many fervent desires that she might never cause him sorrow, by yielding to any sentiment likely to produce it, that by the time they reached Mr. Vanderhoven's, her spirit was elevated above itself.

A servant ushered them into the very room where Meeta's heart had first taken the full and fatal stamp of Rupert's excellence. The expected party were all there. Her newly-acquired strength nearly forsook her, when she heard Madame Roselheim's gentle voice alternately naming Madame Krazau, and her young kinswoman, and found herself animatedly embraced by the latter.

On being released from this unexpected salutation, Meeta faltered out some words of welcome to the young lady,

though she moved unconsciously to the elder.

Madame Krazau received her respectful compliments, with the languor of sickness and fatigue, yet courteously too ; and immediately endeavoured to commence a conversation upon the circumstances of her journey. During these slow, interrupted communications, Meeta had time to observe her own happy rival.

The appearance of Adolpha was very striking. A dark travelling dress, made in the Polish fashion, with a profusion of rich decoration, and sitting close to the shape, was set off by a pelisse of the same silk, lined with rose-colour, and trimmed with fur ; the pelisse flying open, gave a distinguished air to a figure too thin for beauty, but not for elegance. There was exquisite elegance, indeed, in the play of her long, slender throat, as she sought to disengage it from the folds of her ruff, and the scattered ringlets of her fine

black hair : there was much beauty in a face finely shaped, of a clear brown, and animated by teeth almost as brilliant as her eyes.

Meeta could not help thinking, while she regarded it, that such a starry face threw roses and lilies into shade ; and her far-lovelier eyes sunk sadly, even under the admiring beam of Adolpha's.

The ease, the vivacity, the agreeable nothings which Adolpha was saying to those immediately beside her ; the graceful compliments she seemed to have at command for every one ; (and by some rare tact or invisible agency, adapted to their peculiar characters), the address with which she divided her attentions, excited Meeta's surprise and approbation. Hitherto she had believed, that there never could be such exquisite polish, such perfect possession of the whole powers, in so young a woman, untinctured by a certain air of boldness : *but*, in Adolpha, there was not even levity of

manner. Perfect mistress of others, as well as of herself, she seemed to hold the sceptre of society, and awed, while she encouraged ; checked forwardness, while she invited timidity.

No longer doubting that Rupert loved Adolpha, Meeta could but wonder how he contrived to seem so satisfied, where she was not. She ventured not a single glance towards him, (though her heart throbbed to read its fate, in that ingenuous face,) but looking at Madame Rosenheim, saw her regarding Adolpha with the complacency she had done ; their eyes met at that instant ; and Meeta had the courage to exchange a speaking glance with her.

Mr. Vanderhoven now approached his favourite, to request she would lay aside her walking attire, as he had promised his guests the pleasure of their company at supper. Seeing her father quietly put down his hat, with a smile of acquiescence, Meeta, in some little flutter of

hands and spirits, threw off her cardinal, and was endeavouring to get off her hat ; but first it caught in the little lawn cap she wore under it, and then in the ribbon that knotted up her rich brown tresses, and as Mr. Vanderhoven would have assisted her, every confinement of her hair was unfastened by his awkward attempts, and down it fell in such prodigality of beauty over her whole form, that Adolpha uttered a cry of astonishment and admiration.

There is no beauty, perhaps, more decidedly feminine, than very long hair ; and the modest character which that natural mantle bestows upon a youthful face, brightens its charms.

Never did Meeta look more lovely than now, when all blushing and trembling, confused by Adolpha's admiration, and afraid of attracting more, she sought with unaffected haste to gather up her silken tresses, which were as often escaping again over the white and rounded arms

endeavouring to raise them. Her slender, yet perfectly-moulded shape, unconsciously displayed its finest forms, by the movements necessary to assist her exertions ; her touching eyes became tearful through distress, and her cheek alternately shamed the white and the red rose.

Rupert looked at her thus, without speaking or advancing ; while others of the party, to whom this peculiar beauty of Meeta's was as much a secret as to him, crowded round her, to admire its fine texture, and that intense glow which enriched it into harmony with her complexion.

Adolpha was the first to recover from this embarrassing impulse of delight. While she assisted and soothed Meeta, her courtly elegance, tranquillizing self-possession, and sportive ease, formed a picquant contrast with the almost-primitive simplicity of the other ; whose pure red and white,

“By Nature’s sweet and cunning hand laid on;”

her scattered hair, unornamented dress, and shrinking modesty, embellished with the charms of sentiment : a charm, like that of the wild flower, which we come suddenly upon amongst unfrequented paths, and think and find it sweeter than all the flowers of the garden.

Perhaps something like this comparison rose to the mind of Rupert ; for, instead of answering Aremberg, when he whispered some words in praise of Adolpha’s amiable manner, he stood gazing on Meeta.

“Can you be thinking only of Meeta, and her beauty, at this moment?” inquired his friend, in the same low tone, but with a degree of astonishment.

“Not of her beauty,” replied Rupert ; “I am thinking how interesting she looks.”

His mother neither heard this declaration, nor saw the gaze which occasioned Aremberg’s question. Mr. Vanderhoven’s

tall figure being interposed between them during this scene ; and as Rupert immediately went up to Adolpha, and said some playful nothings upon her art of hair-dressing, nothing could awaken a suspicion in Madame Roselheim's mind, that she and every one, were mistaken about the state of her son's heart.

It is strange, — it is lamentable, to observe how often the clearest judgments are perverted from their sure course, by relying on the erring testimony of others. Sometimes, by the event they believe in, being particularly likely to result from a certain combination of circumstances, or peculiarly desirable ; often, by imagining that the same sentiment must always arise from the same causes, and assume the same appearances. Thus Madame Roselheim, who had loved almost suddenly and decidedly from the first, was not accustomed to suppose a deep and ardent passion growing in the heart of Rupert as well as of Meeta, merely from

the seed of affectionate esteem. The introduction of Rupert to Adolpha, too, was like that of Madame Rosenheim's first knowledge of Rhinegravestein, calculated to excite such tender emotions in both, that a mutual attachment seemed almost unavoidable; and, as all she had heard accidentally from Aremberg corroborated the assertion of her brother-in-law, she was now, and for long afterwards, led to believe, that whatever seemed like indifference on the part of Rupert, was, in truth, only the natural attempt to conceal a passion doubtful of its own propriety, and afraid of inviting mortification.

Meeta's hair re-adjusted, and her spirits composed, she endeavoured, with a good grace, to fall into the animated tone of the company; but, in spite of her excellent resolutions and late energy, at first she found it difficult to support her part in the versatile conversation. Yet was she more and more captivated by Adol-

pha, whose frequent glance at the mild figure of Muhldenau, then talking apart with Aremberg, convinced her that this lively creature would rather have sought his intellectual discourse, than proceeded in her amusing war of compliments and trifling with Mr. Vanderhoven. By such self-denying attentions to their host, however, Adolpha proved the real politeness and delicate tact of her character ; giving consequence, and inspiring complacency in the most diffident and least attractive person of the party ; and proving her relationship to Madame Roselheim, by this amiable graciousness.

With sincere joy did Meeta hail every real or fancied discovery of an excellence in this favoured heiress ; since, whatever were her valuable qualities, they would hereafter form the bank of Rupert's happiness ; as such, were to be prized by his friends : and in proportion as Meeta could love her rival, so, she was aware, would the poison of selfish

regret be extracted from her heart's wound.

After a few graceful sallies exchanged with his charming cousin, Rupert had sunk into silence, and suffered her to be engrossed by others. Meeta and his mother happened to look at him at the same instant, and saw his eyes fixed upon Adolpha. Meeta thought that fixture was full of tenderness; Madame Roselheim found sadness in it. Rupert sighed obviously as they were regarding him, though not audibly, and turned away his head; his eyes encountered theirs, and he blushed.

That look, that blush, set the seal to their joint delusion. Meeta's forbidden hopes vanished at once. Madame Roselheim smiled pensively to herself at what seemed her son's unfounded distrust of his own power. Both believed Adolpha the sole object of that tender reverie. Could they have guessed whose image he was contrasting with Adolpha's almost

unconsciously, during this fixed gaze; and what visions of future fortune for himself, and of consequent happiness for his mother, he was mentally yielding up as impossible to be attained by him in the way expected, how would the heart of the one have throbbed, and the other sunk!

At supper, Adolpha seated herself between Rupert and Meeta, ; and, turning to the latter, said, "O, you were not witness of our surprize at sight of our old acquaintance here! I have nerves that a mouse can put into agitation; so I was positively on the point of complimenting my gallant cousin with a fainting fit."

"And may not my nephew claim a share in that flattering compliment?" asked the literal Mr. Vanderhoven.

"And Mr. Aremberg, of course," answered Adolpha, colouring deeply at her omission, or at his notice of it. For some moments afterwards her gaiety was

checked, she looked down, and appeared to have lost self-possession.

Meeta was touched by so unequivocal and unexpected a proof of nice sensibility. Such sincere distress at the courtesies she omitted, bestowed a higher value upon those Adolpha dispensed, proving their source was not a desire to please, but the wish to render happy. Meeta, while she remarked this, thought Adolpha's brilliant eyes were infinitely the handsomer, when they were raised again, for glancing through tears, as well as through their long fringes.

The lively heiress resumed, however, in the same tone, — “It was something alarming to see one's cousin with his arm in a sling, though so agreeable to meet him unexpectedly; so, for the first ten minutes, I was not at all myself; and dear Madame Krazau was half dead with weariness, and all our friends here, new and old, doubtless, knew not what to make of us.”

“I fancy we were all pretty well aware what melancholy remembrances were connected with the sight of us!” observed Aremberg to Muhldenau, solicitous, as usual, to place honourable emotion to its right account: he spoke in a low voice, though so distinct, that not only Meeta but Adolpha caught the remark. The latter became silent and pensive again; although the shade, which then fell over her bright black eyes, had nothing distressful in it.

This extreme susceptibility to proper feelings, confirmed Meeta in her favourable opinion of Adolpha's character; and every moment, more captivated by her flashing vivacity and courtly elegance, she gave a sigh to her own different character and different fate, and turned resolutely away from all observation of Rupert.

Mr. Vanderhoven, however gratified by the particular attention of the fair stranger, lost not sight of his favorite

object which regarded Meeta: he was perpetually calling Aremberg's attention to her, and trying to secure her's for him; but Aremberg as obstinately adhered to Muhldenau, seemingly forgetful that any other person was to partake of the boiled trout which it was his office to dispose of.

"Don't you recognise your friend Aremberg again?" whispered Rupert to Adolpha, "so absent to trifles — —so present to every thing worth caring about!" and as they caught part of their friend's luminous conversation, he directed her eye to the full plate of the latter, which had been docilely taken when presented, and immediately forgotten.

"That cream is excellent, Aremberg?" he asked. "Very excellent," was the mechanical reply. Rupert laughed.

"Such jesting," said Adolpha, with an air of displeasure that became her exceed-

ingly, "is surely unworthy Mr. Aremberg's friend."

Rupert's face grew scarlet : then suddenly bending his lips to her hand, he touched it with them, exclaiming, "I am bound to you for life, dear cousin, for this brave rebuke ! it is not every one who would understand my trick of sporting with what I love and respect. I have done it now for the last time ; believe me."

At this kiss of Adolpha's hand, even Aremberg himself looked round with surprise and enquiry : so that nothing was left to the parties concerned, except a fair explanation of what had passed.

Meeta marvelled at Adolpha's courage while she admired it ; for courage was required, to reprove the man she loved : Madame Roselheim inwardly looked on it as a sort of innocent feint to conceal Rupert's power over her heart. Mr. Vanderhoven appeared as if he apprehended it were incumbent upon him to enforce Adolpha's

short lecture: while Aremberg only smiling, said, with that air of extreme emotion, which was precious in proportion to its rarity,

“ I am the gainer by this war between you, for I learn that I have *two* invaluable friends, where I durst not flatter myself with having more than one.”

“ Mr. Aremberg !” was all Adolpha could say, with a tone of as deep feeling as his own ; and a look that reminded every one, of what she owed him for preservation and consolation.

A shade of yet-greater emotion passed over Aremberg's quiet features, while Adolpha spoke and looked ; but he merely bowed in reply, and began in reality to eat the cream he had praised untasted.

During the remainder of this evening, it was evident that one-half of the company were employed in watching the other. Rupert and Adolpha might be called the principal performers ; Madame Rosel-

heim, Meeta, and Mr. Vanderhoven, the observing spectators.

Madame Roselheim's observations upon her son were not conclusive ; but those she made upon Adolpha were determined. The surprise of seeing him unexpectedly, and apparently wounded, had thrown the latter so wholly off her guard, that she was indeed very near fainting when they first met, and must have fallen to the ground, had not Mr. Aremberg prevented her by timely support.

The agitation caused by this betraying weakness, the fear of hurrying the spirits of her fatigued god-mother, and her anxiety to avoid making confusion in the house of a hospitable stranger, gave peculiar interest to Adolpha's introduction ; so that as Madame Roselheim folded her in her arms, (remembering her brave father,) she inwardly sanctified the choice of her son ; gave a heavy sigh to poor Meeta ; and prayed that

Madame Krazau might have as liberal views as Mr. Vanderhoven.

No symptom of displeasure, or of apprehension appeared in this lady's manner towards Rupert throughout the whole evening : she frequently looked at him with a complacent kindness, which argued well for his success hereafter ; but her small share in conversation was oftener bestowed upon Aremberg, whose profession, character, and habits, rendered him a fitter companion for a sick, and somewhat desponding person. As the anxious mother made these inspiriting observations, her heart smote her for Meeta's sake. Much as the former felt prepossessed in Adolpha's favor, she knew that were the alteration in her power, she would joyfully exchange their situations, and bless the two dearest objects of her tenderness with each other. But such magic was not given her : and unless she could

change fortunes as well as affections, it would be wrong to wish it were.

So painful were these reflections, that Madame Roselheim endeavoured to assuage their bitterness, by readily trusting to Meeta's present appearance of cheerfulness; and as she noticed her, listening to Adolpha with a succession of delighted impressions passing swiftly over her speaking cheek, she ventured to think that the wound could not be deep which was so easily covered; and to hope that the dreaded cloud would melt away, without bursting above their heads, or darkening either the peace of Rupert or of Muhldenau, for a single moment.

Mr. Vanderhoven made several attempts to detain his visitors till a late hour; but Muhldenau's habits were early, and the travellers required rest. The two families parted soon after supper, with every demonstration of mutual regret.

As father Joachim had declined re-

moving from Mr. Vanderhoven's, merely begging permission for himself and Julian to keep aloof from the strangers, Aremberg was to occupy the room prepared for them at the parsonage, (an arrangement by the way, which Mr. Vanderhoven had promoted,) and he, therefore, accompanied the minister's family home.

The party left, became naturally the subject of conversation. Rupert owned that he did not think Adolpha quite so handsome as she was; Aremberg, on the contrary, pronounced her handsomer, though less sprightly: Meeta and Madame Roselheim were to the same degree charmed with that union of highly-finished polish, with unsophisticated feelings, which seemed to mark the character as much as the countenance of this fortunate young woman. And Muhldenau thought he saw equal intellect and animation in the black eyes that

might be expected to aim only at conquest.

Madame Krazau came in for her share of discussion ; and many kindly wishes were breathed for that lamentable ill-health, which appeared rather to make life an endurance, than an enjoyment to its possessor.

Thus pleased with new friends, the small party endeared by long ties, reached the parsonage, where they joined together in family prayer ; then separated, for sleep, or self-communion on their different pillows.

CHAP. III.

MADAME Krazau's visit, which had been originally limited to a week, crept on from day to day, through a fortnight: during which period the hospitable Mr. Vanderhoven insisted upon their neighbours at the parsonage making his house the general *rendezvous*, in order to turn that fortnight to as much account as possible.

Meeta, desirous of knowing Adolpha thoroughly, and of learning to believe her worthy the distinction of Rupert's love, had acceded, on the evening of their first meeting, to a proposal made by the latter, that they should take a walk together the next morning before the rest of the two families were stirring.

She was, therefore, under Adolpha's window, ere the sun had exhaled a single dew-drop. Her gentle call was answered by the amiable stranger herself, who appeared at the window so brightly handsome, that Meeta felt convinced, Beauty rather belongs to light than to colours: for Adolpha's dark skin, though smooth as satin, was untinged by any hue of the rose; yet from its transparency, and the sparkling glitter of her eyes, teeth, and hair, produced the brilliant effect of complete beauty. There was a peculiar tone in her voice also, which heightened this effect. Mr. Vanderhoven, who was ingenious at far-fetched comparisons, would have said it had the freshness of sweet-briar. Meeta felt that it was indeed of an exhilarating character, yet it sunk her heart.

Many, many feelings were roused by it! — many regrets! — many forebodings! — Returning Adolpha's animated salutation with rather less vivacity, she turn-

ed away; and while the other was descending from her apartment, "some natural tears she dropt, but wiped them soon."

A kindly smile had dispersed those tears by the time Adolpha joined her.

Meeta led the way out of Mr. Vanderhoven's pleasure-ground, down a long grove of venerable trees, into the open country, where they rambled amongst meadows and water-courses; at first solely occupied in the enjoyment of the morning air, and the observation of passing objects.

The freshness and brightness of that early hour rendered every thing they saw, more distinct and agreeable. The high road to Utrecht was marked by a long line of milk-carts, filled with well-scoured brass flaggons, almost blinding to look on: the cross-roads were dotted here and there by light stool-waggon, conveying the wealthy shop-keepers from

the city into the country, for a day's holiday.

The large chintz hats of the broad-faced girls within these rude carriages; the frequent and musical chimes of the scattered churches; the sun glittering on the sheet of dew yet covering the lower grass-lands, or reflected from the gilded fane of some village spire; each of these very different sights and sounds, amused or delighted Adolpha: and Meeta failed not to admire the character which, perfected amongst the inventions and refinements of a capital, yet preserved the natural relish for primitive objects.

By degrees, however, outward impressions ceased with both, and they forgot the pleasure of *looking about*, in the strong interest of each other's conversation.

Adolpha asked numerous questions respecting her young relative and his mother: at once discarding those ceremonials of apology and management,

which she knew so well how to use upon proper occasions; and frankly confessing that any thing relating to them was important to her; that her time was too short to admit a more circuitous mode of information, and that she therefore besought Meeta to lay the first stone of the friendship, she hoped was to exist between them hereafter, by denoting in what way her generous god-mother could pay part of their debt of gratitude to Rupert, and she herself return the obligations of her parents to his admirable mother! Mr. Aremberg, she observed, was blessed with all *his* moderate wishes desired, except that, which taken from him by a divine hand, could only be restored in another world: thus they might *feel* gratitude towards him, but could never hope for any opportunity of *testifying* it.

In replying to these enquiries, Meeta could not bring herself to own, that part of her dear Madame Roselheim's means,

indeed all she durst appropriate to charitable purposes, or unforeseen exigencies, was the fruit of ingenious industry. She could not own to this intimate of an hour, that her father's slender stipend was nearly the sole support of those dependent upon him, — this honoured friend included ; and that if he were to be snatched away, they would all be left upon the wide world, houseless and portionless. She could only acknowledge, that the united income of her father, and that of Madame Roselheims, derived from her brother-in-law, was very narrow, yet sufficient for minds disciplined like the elder ones, and habituated as the younger were to the privation of artificial wants.

When Adolpha showed by her looks an eager desire to add to her relation's small income from her own bountiful settlement, Meeta stopped her, by the voluntary promise of sending to claim her friendship for this object of their

mutual interest, whenever a moment should arrive in which she required it. Adolpha was therefore obliged to be satisfied : she finished the conquest of Meeta's heart, by the enthusiasm with which she spoke of Madame Roselheim's manners, her remaining beauty, and her admirable conduct under trials, equal to the degree of her early happiness.

From the mother to the son was an easy transition. Adolpha evidently liked both themes ; for she continued to keep the conversation from taking a wider direction, by introducing Rupert's friend into it, enquiring into the origin of their rare friendship, and remarking how distinctly the character of a man's dearest associate develops his own.

Meeta's tenderest vein was open : a mixture of pain and pleasure melted her, while yielding every moment more and more to the sentiment of regard for her happy rival, and of melancholy regret for the buried companion of her

earlier youth, so that she related the particulars of Aremberg's engagement with Eustatia, and described the modest graces, and devoted attachment of this charming creature with such touching truth, that tears stole down Adolpha's cheek as well as her own.

The latter's unhesitating agreement with Meeta's timidly-expressed notion, that Aremberg would now never marry, set the seal to her captivation; and, encouraged by this unlooked-for sympathy, where she scarcely hoped it, Meeta, who had often been ridiculed for romantic imagination by ladies more experienced, gave way to her natural habits of thought, and talked of Eustatia's beauty, as well as of her worth, till Adolpha lamented that she had never seen the being so regretted, and once so admired.

A picture of Eustatia was, however, near enough at hand to satisfy mere curiosity; and Meeta promised to take an early opportunity of showing it; as it

hung in a little reading-room next to what had been Aremberg's chamber, ere he vacated it for one at the parsonage.

The new friends were by this time on their return homeward; and as they came in sight of the house, caught a glimpse of a male figure at the entrance.

"It is Rupert!" exclaimed Meeta; "he and Mr. Aremberg, I suppose, going to breakfast with you. I will leave you then."

She spoke with trepidation, which was unobserved: for the person she addressed, seemed quite as fluttered as herself. "They will see we have been crying; it will seem so foolish, or impertinent in one, to enquire — to — can we not go round some back way?"

Adolpha asked these disjointed questions in a tone sufficiently expressive of the agitation Rupert's sudden appearance caused her. Until this moment, Meeta had not felt quite satisfied with

the stile of her attachment ; it seemed either too confident, or too manageable. The general tone of her spirits the evening before, might be considered by one of fastidious delicacy, as too gay : but now, taken thus by surprise, ere she had time to throw its COMPANY-VEIL on, Adolpha's heart showed itself without disguise ; and Meeta would have afforded her leisure to recover from this momentary flutter, had not Rupert, perceiving the new direction they were taking, jumped over a sunk fence, and met them.

He was alone, they found ; come from visiting Father Joachim, and playing with Julian, and proposing to return home to breakfast.

Having twice noted their disordered countenances, Meeta hesitatingly owned the last subject of their discourse, and Adolpha's desire to see the picture of Eustatia.

Touched or flattered by this interest in his friend, he exclaimed with eager-

ness, "We have time for it now; Mr. Vanderhoven is opening letters, and Madame Krazau is not down stairs. Let me conduct you to the room where the picture hangs! when you see it, my dear cousin, you will not wonder at poor Aremberg being still a mourner. In my opinion, the heart belonging to such a lovely face, must have been one of the best and tenderest in the world."

"You did not know her then!" Adolpha half questioned, in a subdued tone.

Rupert replied in the negative; and softly opening the house-door, led the way along the ground-floor, into a small room, the single window of which threw a strong light upon the object they sought.

The face of the portrait was so round and fair, so delicately tinged with the pearly tints of childhood, that it seemed meant to represent that of a creature just standing on the threshold of youth; but

the figure had a soft fullness and finish of form which belongs to riper age. Perfect as that figure was, the eye was principally fascinated by the countenance; which was so smilingly sweet, so innocently happy, that the lamb resting its head on the white arm that pressed it against her breast, and the half-blown rose which the playful animal was tearing thence, seemed comparatively feeble emblems of beauty and innocence.

Rupert looked on the picture as though for the first time, expressing his admiration and regret, with amiable fervor.

“ Did you ever see a countenance more perfectly good, more infantine, and yet so speaking? How that naturally-clustering hair becomes such a youthful face! the colour so uncommon and so exquisite! there is no colour half so beautiful! Alas, to think that such a beaming face, such a breathing form, are now — but dust!”

“Pardon me, Meeta,” he added, seeing her turn aside, drowned in tears. He had laid his hand on her arm through earnestness, and as he concluded, the unintentional and sympathising pressure he gave it, thrilled to Meeta’s soul. Other feelings beside that of awakened memory, caused this thrill : her hair and Eustatia’s were of the same colour ; and Rupert had just declared his exclusive admiration of it. She hoped that Adolpha, who was standing fixed before the picture, might not have heard this declaration ; but she hoped in vain : and as Adolpha withdrew her eyes, and caught a glimpse of herself in a looking-glass beside them, she said, in a low voice, and with a poor attempt at a smile, “What I would give to be like that portrait !”

“You need not wish it,” observed Meeta, rather precipitately, “your cousin’s admiration of one stile of beauty, we will hope, does not hinder him from

feeling the power of another." Meeta said this with an air of sportiveness, but in a tone tremulous from concern for her companion's painful self-distrust.

The dark-glancing eye of Adolpha rested on her for a moment, with a peculiar expression in it: but she took no further notice of the consolatory remark. "I am sure I could copy this picture," she said, cheerfully again, "shall I do so? I am an indifferent good copyist in miniature; and you were regretting" —

Meeta's transport of gratitude and pleasure interrupted her. The offer was accepted joyfully, and arrangements made for Adolpha's security against interruption, and for silence respecting it. "The miniature being for you, Meeta," said Adolpha, pensively, "you may do what you like with it afterwards; but talking about it, or showing it in progress, might revive Mr. Aremberg's regrets more than any of his friends could bear to witness."

The breakfast bell was now heard ringing, and easily persuaded to remain where he was, Rupert went in with them to the parlour. Meeta was astonished at the instant change in Adolpha, from whose countenance every trace of sadness vanished like mist before the sun, and who now began her usual amusing skirmish of sportive trifling with her god-mother and Mr. Vanderhoven, and turned from them to the attack of Rupert, with a show of perfect carelessness.

But Adolpha had lived in the *world*, and the moment she found herself in society, she remembered that she had a guard to keep over her natural quickness of feeling; in addition to which, she made it her study to enliven the spirits of her languid protectress.

Meeta fancied that the latter must be the reason of Adolpha's very different manner when alone, and when in company: she admired her most in a circle;

but to love her, she felt she must see her often as she had done during their lonely ramble of the morning.

After Rupert's remark upon the dark-glowing hair of Eustatia's picture, Meeta's heart, in spite of all her better exertions, remained on the watch for some additional gratification: yet what a war of weak and laudable feelings was within it!—delight, self-reproach, pity for Adolpha, and a conviction of failing thus in her duty to Rupert, and to such a friend as Madame Roselheim.—Each of these feelings oppressed her, as she observed that Rupert's looks had a shade less of beaming kindness, and his voice a tone less touching, when he spoke to, or looked at Adolpha, than when he addressed herself.

“Was his mother mistaken then,” she asked her thoughts; “did he not prefer this fortunate creature! and was she so unhappy as to love him then, as

Meeta did, unsought, and with even less hope?"

At the last suggestion of her tottering heart, Meeta's thoughts fled as from a serpent. She had resolved never to hope, never to wish for a return of the pure affection she felt; and the deep compassion she now began to feel for her, whom so lately she had considered as an object to be envied, assisted in extinguishing these criminal fancies as they arose.

Adolpha did not forget her promise: the very next day she commenced her copy of Eustatia's portrait. The season favoured her amiable wishes; for being the middle of June, there was light enough for her purpose, long ere the family were stirring; and she therefore wrought on the miniature two or three hours each day, before breakfast, without observation. The great remainder of her time she gave to society. Mr. Vanderhoven was so officiously anxious to

pay his guests attention, and to show them every object of curiosity within reach, that he necessarily threw much bustle, and show of pleasure into their visit, but in reality took from their better enjoyments.

Every one concerned in this, secretly regretted it ; as each wished to ascertain the sentiments of some other, upon some particular point ; and that aim was not easily accomplished, when all put on their gala spirits with their gala attire.

Much, however, was learned of each other's characters, — though more guessed at. Adolpha rose in estimation, the closer she was examined. Though ever the sparkling light of general society, with an air and a look that made casual observers fancy her too free from care to sympathise with distress, in private she unlocked those polished gates that conceal the inward feelings, and showed a heart well worthy love and confidence.

With Madame Roselheim she indulged in conversation about her parents, weeping their loss with sudden bursts of a sensibility still too little under command when once yielded to, yet ever honourable.

With Meeta she talked of Rupert and Aremberg, and the buried Eustatia ; displaying the rare capacity of entering completely into the grief of a friend for a person unknown to the sympathiser ; and seeming alive to the pleasure of contemplating excellence, whether continuing to act in this world, or removed to a higher.

When their discourse grew too melancholy, Meeta would draw from her companion livelier subjects ; she would induce Adolpha to give her a description of her life at the court of Copenhagen. And, though the sprightly describer would immediately present the most brilliant or amusing pictures of persons and manners ; though her almost-dramatic

talents, and power of graceful mimicry, would cause every character spoken of, to pass visibly before them; yet did Meeta delight in her conversation the more, when she painted the enjoyment she used to find when taken into the country, and heard her emphatic preference of quiet Mariendorpt, over all the glare and glitter of the world.

At these moments, sighs would throng to Meeta's lips, and die there unbreathed. She thought how exactly such a heart was formed to bestow happiness upon Rupert; and it seemed criminal in her, therefore, to feel a sentiment, which must always make her dread his election of the very person, she would otherwise have wished to see his wife. In proportion as she thought thus, she became doubly careful to repress in herself any inward emotion, or outward attention which might attract the notice of Rupert, and cause him to suspect a preference, that she would sooner die than discover. She could

not, however, deny herself the poor gratification of decidedly showing those interested in the circumstance, that Mr. Vanderhoven's views with regard to her and his nephew, could never succeed.

Rupert's playful remark had first directed her attention to those views ; and perfectly sure that Aremberg himself had no sentiment for her which required delicate handling ; she continued to let him feel and others see, that she considered him as the mourner of her early friend, not as her own expected or coveted lover.

Without betraying this secret motive by what would have been an impertinent indiscretion, Meeta talked of Aremberg in the same strain to Adolpha ; and so perfectly were these two unpractised hearts agreed upon the subject of first-love and eternal constancy, that it was settled between them, that Mr. Aremberg, though just turned thirty, never would form another engagement.

Madame Roselheim, who saw with pleasure the intimacy of these new friends, promoted it from the tenderest regard for both. She justly believed, that, in such a heart as Meeta's, love might be successfully combated by friendship, and she therefore sought every opportunity of displaying Adolpha's fine qualities, and making them the subject of her private conversations with the child of her adoption.

While doing this, without reference to her son, Madame Roselheim saw that Meeta listened delightedly, and replied with animation : but whenever she ventured to express a hope that such a charming creature was to be his reward at no distant day, (and never did she do so, without the sharpest pang of pity,) she would then perceive that all selfish regrets were not wrung out of her that listened.

Sometimes only a changing cheek, an eye trembling on the brink of tears, a

choaking sigh, or universal tremor, replied to her remark ; sometimes she was answered calmly and firmly ; — oftener with an eagerness of effort at self-command, which gave an alarming expression to her manner : yet still, under each of these appearances, Madame Roselheim saw enough to convince her she had acted right in awakening Meeta's attention to her own state, — enough to inspire her with equal respect and pity for the poor girl, whose struggle against self-indulgence was evidently as sincere as obvious.

Rupert's conduct meanwhile had nothing in it to excite an apprehension in his mother's mind, that he either discerned Meeta's partiality, or 'wished to excite it ; but she could no longer believe him what is called *in love* with Adolpha. He was apparently too much at his ease, both when in, and when out of her company, for that ; yet he admired his charming cousin ; and perhaps

only the fear of being thought to seek her fortune, or a delicate repugnance to take advantage of Madame Krazau's sense of obligation to him, might be the reason why he had not permitted admiration to deepen into a more serious sentiment. Whatever it was, Madame Roselheim determined still to avoid any interference: to refrain from discovering her faint wishes on the subject, lest the knowledge of them should bias him on so important a matter: in short, to let events and feelings take their course, unimpeded and unhaſtened.

Such a mother, indeed, could have no wishes that were not purely disinterested. Since no human power could ever restore to her the husband and the happiness of her youth, there was not a change of place or of fortune, that she desired for herself. She was contented at Mariendorpt: she knew she was useful there; she felt she was beloved: next to the objects of natural affection,

she loved Muhldenau and Meeta. Thus; so long as Rupert could be satisfied with a humble home offered by friendship ; — so long as his heart yearned for no dearer object than a mother, — so long would she wish nothing for him. Sad, sad experience of its emptiness, had well nigh extinguished in her heart, all ambition for those dearest to her : she had long ceased to set a high value upon honours and power, even for them. All she now asked of Providence, was their continuance in rectitude, and their possession of happiness, wherever they themselves might chuse to place that invisible deity.

Thus she was one of the very few who do not insist upon every other's mental optics, seeing objects as they do : she never attempted to argue any one out of a feeling ; all her anxiety was but to lead them to consider its propriety. By such a principle she was guided in her conduct between Aremberg and Meeta.

The drift of the latter's behaviour was quickly evident to her, and as she could not deceive herself about Aremberg's sentiments, she considered it fortunate that Meeta was not more interested in him. Certainly, so far from increasing in assiduities from observing the evident aim of his uncle, and the mild encouragement given by Muhldenau; Aremberg contrived to mark the nature of his regard, by frequent allusions to Meeta's union with some other man hereafter. Since the arrival of their Danish acquaintance, he had absented himself so much from their society (of course, because he might have seemed to seek Meeta there) that such absence amounted nearly to incivility. Daily increasing in seriousness and habits of study, it appeared probable that he would realise Adolpha's notion, and remain wedded to past days, and to his sacred profession. It was not Aremberg alone that refused to enjoy the friendly

association at Mr. Vanderhoven's; amiable as Adolpha was, and inoffensive as Madame Krazau seemed, Father Joachim persisted in the resolution of absenting himself and his pupil, from their now enlarged parties. Rupert could not quite understand why he was thus shy of persons in no way concerned to give him the slightest annoyance: he saw that a much greater degree of perturbed anxiety on Julian's account, was evinced by the Franciscan; that he now never suffered him out of his sight, and rarely took him beyond the precincts of the pleasure ground. Rupert regretted this change for all their sakes; — for Adolpha's, who had been strongly interested in the child the moment she heard his relationship to Rupert, and never saw him except accidentally; for Julian's own, whose innocent amusements were thus unnecessarily circumscribed; and for the excuse it afforded Aremberg of keeping aloof from that social inter-

course, which was calculated to wean him from unavailing regrets.

Rupert had made so strict a law to himself never to interfere with Father Joachim's plans for his pupil, that he forbore either question or complaint, though he saw that such constraint and confinement was affecting the Franciscan's own health and spirits, as much as it had already lowered the vivacity of his little charge. No species of proposed recreation, nor no offer of wholly excluding the neighbourhood at such times, could ever get the Franciscan to join their excursions from home; but he now and then ventured amongst them for half an hour in the parlour.

With Aremberg there was one spell all-potent; that was music.

Adolpha touched the guitar with exquisite delicacy, and Rupert who had lately regained the perfect use of his right hand, played delightfully on the flute. Meeta's voice was pressed into

the service of their little concerts : and sometimes in airy harmony, with the gay accompaniment of Adolpha's instrument, sometimes in touching unison with the fuller and mellower tones of Rupert's, she alternately animated or subdued her auditors. All noticed, though only Madame Roselheim guessed why, that Meeta's voice was more tremulous and less certain when accompanied by the flute, than when by the guitar. "That was strange," her hearers said ; "for her tones were naturally so rich and flute-like."

Aremberg often evinced their pathetic power, by stealing and unconscious tears.

Madame Roselheim's tender anxiety to allege plausible reasons for Meeta's particular timidity, whenever called to exercise her musical talent singly with Rupert, by degrees excited Meeta's attention to this anxiety itself ; it alarmed — it shocked — it overwhelmed her. She scarcely doubted that her secret had not

escaped the eye of this affectionate and discerning friend : and as she felt now, her pitying manner, a feeling of intense gratitude, mixed with the bitter sense of humiliation.

An unexpected circumstance confirmed this observation.

Two or three neighbouring families were joined to those of Mr. Vanderhoven at the parsonage one evening, and, after an impromptu dance on the bowling-green at sun-set, they were just returned to Madame Krazau and Aremberg in the harbour, where they were to sup, when a packet was brought to Rupert ; — it came from the army.

Prefacing the act by a few words of graceful apology, he broke the seal, and walked forwards to the front of the harbour to read his letter.

Madame Roselheim, who had entered on the arm of Meeta, and was now with her at the lower end of this rural hall,

followed her son, while retaining Meeta's support.

“No summons for him, I hope!” she faintly whispered, after some minutes close observation of his countenance. Meeta's heart caught the alarm of her's, and stopped its pulsation: her swift eye glancing over Rupert's face, saw it grave and sad. “Oh Heaven!” she exclaimed, forgetting every thing, at that moment, except the dread of his recall into war and danger.

Her exclamation electrified Madame Roselheim; who felt instantly the necessity of saving a young heart from the future agony of knowing that it had betrayed itself: she drew her arm from under Meeta's, saying kindly, “Do not stay here, Meeta;—you will feel too much for me if—go, go into the house, I shall need you there, perhaps.”

Her friend's true meaning flashed upon Meeta; the momentary glance of those soft and pitying eyes had the effect of

lightning : it seemed to wither her ; but recovering her power of thought and movement, with a burning blush she glided past Rupert, and disappeared.

Madame Roselheim approached her son, and cast a troubled look over the paper he held. “ Thank God ! ” she exclaimed, “ I see my brother Melchior’s hand ! if he is well, what other news can affect you thus, my son ? — Are you — ” The apprehensive mother could not articulate more.

“ Not recalled, dearest mother ” he replied, gently leading her forth under the trees ; “ but my news is not agreeable. There has been a severe engagement, in which I have lost many friends ; — only friends.” He added, seeing the effect of this information, “ One of my truest well-wishers, though little of a personal friend, is taken from me, in Count Cratzenstein : he is killed.” Rupert’s voice faltered at the conclusion,

and he brushed his hand across his eyes : and tried to smile. “ I am not yet hardened enough to these things : and the poor Count laid the first stone of my fortune.”

His mother did not immediately answer ; the pang of alarm which had seized her when he spoke of lost friends, had not quite passed away, and her heart was yet vibrating between fear and thankfulness.

“ I am sincerely sorry for the death of the Count ; she said at length, her eyes suffusing more, as she proceeded, “ but if it has pleased Providence to preserve *others*, — to preserve also your noble patron the Field Marshal !” —

“ Ah, my mother,” interrupted Rupert, “ my uncle tells me, that the brave Torstenson is not likely to remain at the head of the Swedish army : he is about to retire ; and if he goes, I lose not only the precious privilege of his society, but,

too probably, all my high-raised hopes ; —and for your sake, I would fain be, —” he left the sentence unfinished.

His mother pressed his hand against her heart : “ Let us not anticipate evil, my Rupert. Your good uncle does not always report correctly ; because he does it hastily. He is apt to despond for himself upon matters of promotion, so may do it for you too. The Marshal’s resignation —”

“ Is too certain, I fear,” was her son’s reply ; “ excessive fatigue before and after the battle I spoke of, and several nights bivouacking upon marshy ground, additionally soaked by heavy rains, have brought on an ague, which has made sad havoc with his shattered constitution. The medical men positively order him to retire from service ; and he has written to the Swedish Regency, for permission to do so. Thus I must make up my mind to lose this invaluable friend thus

early in my military career ; God grant it may be for the saving of his life !”

Rupert ended with a sigh, heavier than the occasion seemed to justify ; — heavier than was frequent, with his happy and hoping nature. But he had greater cause of concern, than he chose to pain his mother by imparting to her.

General Wrangel was mentioned as the probable successor of Torstenson, and from him Rupert knew he had no personal favour to hope. Wrangel was brave, able, and strong-minded, but his morals were unsound, his passions lawless, and his petty jealousy in affairs of gallantry, was known to have obstructed the advancement of younger and handsomer officers. After the unintentional injury which Rupert had done him with the beauty at Halle, the latter had taken care to avoid similar ground of offence, but Wrangel either resented that past defeat, or expected future ones from the same hand ; and estimating conquests

of this nature at a high price himself, he concluded Rupert had vanity enough to do the same, and thus he acquired the habit of considering the young subaltern in the light of an insolent adversary.

From these circumstances it was not difficult to foresee the personal consequences of this unlucky change of commanders; and the suddenness as well as severity of the misfortune, fairly vanquished Rupert's spirit. Perhaps unknown to himself he had raised a hope of rising to a situation in which he might indulge his tender preference of Meeta, without injury to his first and dearest duty towards his mother, and that, through the united power of his own exertions, and the marshal's friendship. Be that as it may, he tried to rally, and said something in censure of his own weak despondency.

"My son," exclaimed his mother, regarding him with the fullest and tenderest approbation, "do I not know that

you wish to be honoured and rich, only for my sake! Why then blame this just regret? but indeed you magnify the evils of this change of Generals. The same merit which recommended you to Count Cratzenstein and the marshal, will make a friend and patron of his successor, whoever that may be. The greatest cause of grief I find, is that you are to lose the benefit of the noble Torstenson's society; and that you lose it in consequence of his impaired health."

"Yes, yes, these are the real evils." Rupert thoughtfully answered, returning to his letter. Madame Roselheim all at once recollected Meeta. "I'll leave you to settle your thoughts," she said gently, and anxious to relieve the suspense of the poor absent one, turned towards the house.

Meeta appeared from it at the same instant. She had gone thither, completely overwhelmed with shame, and for some time believed herself incapable of ever

encountering again the eyes which had warned her away: but first, the hope arose, that Madame Roselheim might not entertain more than a slight suspicion of her feelings; then the stronger one, that timely courage might entirely eradicate that suspicion; and lastly, so painful an eagerness to learn whether a new trial threatened her, that she summoned resolution not to wait for the dreaded communication.

With allowable deceit in both parties, — virtuous shame inspiring it on one side, and the purest humanity on the other, they now advanced, and met. “Dismiss your kind fears for me, my dear Meeta,” exclaimed the soft and encouraging voice of her tenderest friend, “my son is not recalled: I may be happy still.”

That delicate mode of allaying another's unauthorised fears, thrilled the soul of Meeta: a variety of contradictory emotions made her tremble

from head to foot. She was unpractised even in such holy dissembling as the present; and though she spoke not, though she could sooner have died, than have owned her strong sense of that quick-sighted affection which had saved her surprised heart from exposing itself to Rupert, and to others; she gave Madame Roselheim a glance of the liveliest gratitude, while the carnation blood of her cheeks was almost seen to throb, as it deepened into vermilion.

Without appearing to notice this tell-tale glow, Madame Roselheim, as they turned back to rejoin the company in the arbour, briefly acquainted her with the nature of Rupert's letters. Meeta, though relieved from her first panic, was too much oppressed by confusion, and too sincerely grieved for Rupert, to be capable of distinct, or continued conversation; and both felt relieved, therefore, when they found them-

selves mixed up again with their other friends.

It was neither the fashion of the age, nor of the country in which these persons lived, to banish every thing except amusement from their social meetings. Even mere acquaintance were supposed to take such good-natured interest in the gratifications or vexations of those around them, that for one strongly moved, to have masked either his joy or sorrow, under a civil exterior of undisturbed composure, would have been considered as affectation, or as insult.

In Mariendorpt especially, all had acquired the right of participating in some degree with every member of their minister's family: and while Madame Rosenheim with a gentle sigh, now explained the cause of her temporary absence, and of her son's grave face, she feared not the inward vexation of her neighbours, at this shade thrown over themselves. Sincere sympathy was expressed, true

concern shown : but that done, cheerfuller ideas were suggested ; and the kind-hearted Hollanders joined Adolpha and Madame Krazau, in reviving predictions that Marshal Torstenson would recover his health, return to his command, and make Rupert a colonel at least. As no sorcery, however, could restore Count Cratzenstein to life, they forbore to speak of him.

Rupert yielded to these benevolent intentions, and smiled at his predicted honours : and, although the general tone of hilarity with which the evening commenced was greatly lowered, one of amiable affectionateness took its place ; and serious, yet not melancholy conversation prevailed after supper, instead of mirth and music.

Amongst so many persons interested in Rupert, Meeta's greater proportion of sympathy was less noticeable. During many a delightful ramble with him in the early days of his residence at Marien-

dorpt, Torstenson's character and military history had been their sole theme : so that, well-acquainted with the latter's worth, and with the importance of his favour to a young candidate for the same fortune, Meeta felt all the weight of the blow which had depressed the being most precious to her.

But her paramount feeling was the consciousness of having betrayed her weakness to the honoured eyes of Madame Roselheim. And, although that indulgent friend (justly relying upon Meeta's awakened guard of herself) had now resumed her usual tranquillity of look and manner, while addressing her, a constant thrill of confusion running through the veins of the latter, whenever she met her eyes, renewed again and again the impression of the past distressing moment.

How did she envy the happy Adolpha, who, privileged to show all her interest in the mother and the son, appeared

under the most favorable aspect ! Adolpha, indeed, showed more than her usual depth of feeling upon this occasion ; and when the party broke up, after conversing awhile with her protectress, she took Mr. Aremberg aside, and walked with him alone some time.

In despite of her grateful friendship for Aremberg, Adolpha had confessed to Meeta that she stood fearfully in awe of him ; consequently this voluntary *tête-à-tête* proved how interested she must be in the subject of their discourse. — It was interesting to her : it contained a frank acknowledgment on her part of an earnest wish to serve her brave cousin in some way ; and for that purpose, she begged his friend to let her know as soon as possible who succeeded to the command of Marshal Torstenson, as many of their Danish connections had friends of high influence in the Swedish councils, and it might be in Madame Krazau's power, through their means, to procure

such recommendations for Rupert to the new General, as might indemnify him in the way of promotion for the loss of his two first military patrons.

Receiving Aremberg's promise to do this, she slipped back again to her god-mother.

After Muhldenau's family were returned home, and their nightly prayers read, Rupert, instead of going directly to his room, went out into the garden with Aremberg, and remained there some time after the other's departure.

Meeta observed that he was still walking by himself, when she approached her window to open it completely, on retiring to rest.

The vine which covered all that side of the house, and even spread above the roof of her present chamber, formed so thick a curtain before her casement, that she was not likely to be visible from within : she extinguished her light how-

ever, and indulged herself for an interval, in contemplating Rupert by the waning moonlight.

Never had she seen his countenance with a similar expression in it. A fixed seriousness had taken place of its usual cheerful sweetness : and as he slowly walked up and down, the faint moon-beam occasionally striking on his figure, through openings in the high dark shrubs, made him appear unusually pale, and thus gave increased interest to his whole appearance. The regular return of his military step had something solemn in it, heard thus in the deep repose of night : Meeta felt it, like melancholy music. She believed him revolving the news from the army ; and, considering the line of conduct he ought to pursue in consequence ; and, as she thought this, future probabilities came rushing on her with overwhelming force.

Perhaps the letter he had received this night might be destined to fix his fate in

domestic life. Upon the present occasion, Adolpha had shown her interest in him without an attempt at concealment; so that if hitherto he had been deterred from ascertaining his hope of success, through apprehension of failure, Meeta thought he must now be encouraged to dare the one, and expect the other. From Madame Krazau too, she fancied there would be no opposition; or, if there were, her opposition in this world was not likely to endure long: she was evidently fast slipping out of life.

Conceiving that similar conclusions must have been made by Rupert, Meeta judged him at this moment revolving them in his mind, and settling his future plans in consequence.

But why did not an air of tender joy, or of passionate impatience soften the meditative bend of his brow? Could there be a prospect of greater earthly felicity for any mortal, than that of an union with the woman he loved, and that

woman the object of general admiration, with fortune to rid him of every care, accomplishments to honour, and virtues to bless him ?

Meeta's insidious heart would have reminded her of many a look, many an escaped word from Rupert, which it seemed impossible for her to have excited, had his whole heart really belonged to another : but she turned resolutely away from such suggestions ; only suffering herself to fear that his heart was yet unwon, and that if he should offer himself at last to Adolpha, it would be rather from motives of gratitude for her generous attachment, and from consideration of his mother's natural wishes, than from such a spontaneous sentiment as gives transport to the person who may indulge it.

So imperfect a happiness for Rupert, for whom Meeta thought even the highest earthly felicity poor and tasteless, was bitterness to contemplate ; and she

stood with eyes swimming in tears, mournfully regarding him, as he continued his solitary walk up and down.

For herself, she ventured not to indulge any regret. Happily her natural romance of feeling had been timely moderated by a knowledge of her parents' sufferings from the want of that "dross" which youth generously disdains, and ignorantly believes unworthy thought. She had heard too many accounts of the extreme misery into which imprudent young persons had plunged their exiled families by gratifying an otherwise honourable affection in defiance of mutual penury: she had witnessed too often the pain with which Madame Roselheim received the bounty of her good brother-in-law, not to acknowledge that a competence of some sort, at least a fair prospect of such competence, is necessary, ere two hearts dare yield themselves up to the very best species of attachment.

And if she, so young and inexperienced, could own the sad importance of such considerations, what must they be in the just estimate of a parent? Thus, while Meeta believed Madame Rosenheim anxious for her son's union with Adolpha, though aware of the former's devotedness to him, she did not blame this perfect friend, but rather honoured her maternal affection.

Murmuring prayers, therefore, in Rupert's behalf; intreating Heaven to influence his judgment so as to produce the greatest happiness for himself and his mother; and asking for her own self only perfect submission, she withdrew from the window, leaving Rupert still wrapt in silent meditation.

The meditations Meeta had fancied for him, were not very unlike those he really pursued. Struck by Adolpha's earnest wish to serve him, as reported by Aremberg, and awakened by the mere arrival of his uncle's letter, to the me-

memory of former floating thoughts about her, he was in truth seriously asking himself whether those passing moments of flattered consciousness, and strongly-excited interest, did not impose the necessity upon him of offering her the heart she might thus have been led to consider as at her command?

Though certain that he had never intentionally, or involuntarily, breathed a word translatable into the language of passion, he thought that perhaps he had been culpably undecided, when his uncle first noticed Adolpha's regard, and laid its great advantages before him; and that even his perfect inexperience of love did not excuse him for having been so long dubious whether he ought not to give that name to the affectionate admiration she inspired?

There was something within him now, which assured him that he had never felt any spontaneous wish of being more to her than a friend and cousin.

This very absence of such a desire, on the present occasion, made him readily believe what, had it promised him happiness, he would with difficulty have believed, and generously have forborne to act upon, her secret preference. And though he deemed it unlikely that Madame Krazau should consent to such a match, he knew not whether he ought not, for his mother's sake, to court the possible chance of success; and at any rate for Adolpha's, propitiate her delicacy, and make the sacrifice of his own private wishes, by offering her those affections, upon which perhaps his surprised vanity, or grateful kindness had taught her to reckon.

Removed from his uncle's constant remarks, and surrounded by persons who knew Adolpha merely as the equal friend of both her preservers, he had insensibly forgotten to consider her in a nearer point of view: Aremberg had forborne advice, nay even raillery upon the sub-

ject; Madame Roselheim appeared not to dream of such a circumstance; so that it was not until the moment in which her coming was announced by Madame Krazau's letter, that Rupert felt conscious, something more than a relation's feeling might be leading Adolpha to Mariendorpt.

But how each of them might feel, when they met again, after the lapse of so many months, was a matter of conjecture: by that time Adolpha might have worn out her slight liking for him; and in that case, all Rupert's perplexities would vanish. He could not disguise from himself, that such a termination would cause him joy.

The strange disturbance he experienced, when, having playfully taxed Meeta with abetting the design against Aremberg's heart, her agitation seemed first to acknowledge, and then to deny it; — that disturbance, had for a brief

instant caused him to start at his own danger: but, resolving to think the weakness he dreaded, impossible to a son bound to labour solely for the dearest of mothers, he had so successfully banished that conversation from his thoughts, that it was only now and then Meeta's sensitive heart could feel quick vibration with some passing emotion of his. It was not, indeed, till Rupert actually saw her by the side of Adolpha, and felt the wide difference of the emotions they caused him, that he was convinced his growing delight at Mariendorpt had another cause, besides that of his mother's society.

From that moment, he felt greater difficulty in resisting the pleasure of comparing these interesting rivals with each other; a comparison which always seemed to justify to himself, the tender preference accorded to Meeta: he *did* resist it, however; and never, for a single

instant, permitted himself to imagine the possibility of safely indulging in it, at a future time.

Thus, the sole fruit poor Meeta was likely to gather from this smothered preference, was the bosom-tribute of his present indifference to the woman, higher gifted by fortune than herself:—the period was perhaps not far distant, when, totally extinguished for her, reason and gratitude might succeed in reluming the fire afresh, and directing it towards this very object.

Upon this last visionary hope, Rupert was, in truth, revolving now: hope, it may be termed, since both duty and tenderness made his mother's restoration to something like her former affluence and station, the dearest aim of his life. For her sake, therefore, he bent his spirit to calculate the worldly advantages of a marriage with one as rich as amiable; for her sake, he felt that he could tear from his heart, even wishes deeper root-

ed, hopes wider blown, than those which had silently grown up there for Meeta ; but the longer he reflected, the more was he convinced, that he could not cheat a devoted and trusting creature, into a false belief of being fondly beloved, when she was but calmly esteemed. It was not yet, therefore, he concluded, that he ought to offer himself to Adolpha : it was incumbent upon him to wait, until the impression made by Meeta should be quite effaced by time and his own conscientious self-denial ; after which, he might hope to cultivate a true affection for Adolpha, growing out of more attentive consideration of her many excellencies, and a stronger conviction, than he could even now persuade himself to entertain, of her decided preference.

Fixed in such resolutions, Rupert resolved to "think no more," that night ; and, quitting the garden, he repaired to his chamber, where, commending his

thoughts and actions to the guidance of a higher Power, as earnestly, though more briefly than Meeta had done, he sunk by degrees into the quiet sleep bestowed on virtue.

CHAP. IV.

FORTUNATELY for Rupert, Colonel Rosenheim's letter contained nothing which could create awkwardness in him, on the subject of Adolpha Falkenberg. The Colonel's head, while writing, had been too full of vexatious military changes, for any further mention of that lady, than what was given in a congratulation of himself for having had her embroidered scarf upon his shoulders, when all the rest of his accoutrements fell into the hands of the enemy. Rupert therefore discussed the letter with his mother, the next day, without any embarrassment.

A night's rest, or reflection, had calmed the agitations of both mother and son, when they met to review their feelings of the evening past. Rupert would fain

have persuaded his mother of what he tried to believe himself, that he was once more fit for active service. The restored use of his arm seemed indeed to give colour to this assertion : but though the Franciscan's skill had greatly subdued the effects of the internal injury his patient had received, the latter was inwardly conscious that so long as strict regimen, avoidance of night-damps, and abstinence from violent exercise were requisite, so long must he consider himself unable to brave the casualties of war.

Under this impression, he could not make a successful stand against the tender questionings of his mother, and the serious expostulations of Father Joachim, when he would have obtained their consent to silence Colonel Roselheim's rough censure of *idlers* and *stay-at-homes*, by immediately rejoining the army.

Independent of the mortification excited by his uncle's contemptuous raillery, the young soldier fancied that every mo-

ment lost, at his age, and in his profession, was irretrievable : he was anxious not to miss any opportunity of distinguishing himself; since every step he might so obtain, must enlarge his means of testifying his affection for his mother, and contribute to that feeling of honourable independence for her and for himself, which he thirsted to attain. He was desirous, also, of seeing the noble Torstenson, ere the removal of that hero from the army ; not only in the hope of securing his affectionate remembrance hereafter ; but that he might learn from him, the best mode of honourably conciliating the favor of those who were to succeed in the command.

The government of Pomerania had been always named as the Field-marshal's reward, whenever he should choose to claim it for his military labours ; so that unless Rupert could give him the meeting in that part of Germany, or proceed immediately to the Swedish head-quar-

ters, he was not likely to meet this valued friend again. But the latter step his health forbade ; the former, poverty denied.

Most things are practicable to the rich ; to the poor nearly all are impossible : only at times like these, or when the distresses of others cried out to him, in vain, did Rupert feel more than his mother's wrongs ; one throb for himself, would then rise in his gentle breast against his father.

But ever careful not to infect his mother with his regrets, or to draw upon himself obligations which he might avoid either by self-denial, or self-restraint, he kept this cause of concern secret, not only from her, but from Aremberg ; so true it is, that for perfect friendship, perfect equality is necessary : delicacy on one side, and generosity on the other, rendering disparity of fortune, a just reason for reserve upon particular occasions.

A day or two of pensiveness in Madame Roselheim, and of seriousness in

her son, were the only visible traces left upon them, by the unpleasant news contained in Colonel Roselheim's letter. Both felt with due gratitude that what they grieved at, was rather a disappointment than a calamity; the loss of a hope, not the bereavement of an actual blessing; and that consequently, though they might be permitted to shrink under the stroke, they would be unpardonable to let it crush them.

It was time, indeed, to dismiss such absorbing thoughts as render us unsocial: the immediate circle round them claimed attention: for the unpleasant hour of parting with Madame Krazau and Adolpha approached.

Every one dreaded that hour; every one except the very person who was supposed the least able to encounter it. In truth, so far from testifying a lover-like sadness upon this occasion, Rupert, unknown to to himself, felt his spirits rise in proportion as that hour drew nearer. Although closer acquaintance with his charming

cousin had increased his affectionate esteem for her character, and convinced him that she merited the truest attachment, a sentiment of uneasiness in her presence, the consciousness of not liking her enough, and the fear of being thought to like her too well, rendered her society a restraint rather than an enjoyment to him. But he saw that her bright spirits were often suddenly overcast, as the dreaded day came on, and a pang of pity, as often stopt him short in his endeavour to amuse away her fit of dejection.

Meeta, too, who had lately surprised Adolpha in tears more than once, though she delicately forbore to notice it, even to the confused weeper herself, yet beheld her with the tenderest compassion, and almost wished that Rupert were now as sensible to her beauty and excellence, as she had at first believed him.

Meeta could well afford such generosity: her heart was deceitful like the most of our frail species, and seemed to wish

more for Adolpha, in proportion as it had less occasion to wish for itself. For in spite of all Rupert's sincere resolutions, a look, a word would escape him, which her beating heart translated only too well. Yet she forbore to dwell on those throbs of blissful emotion ; turning from them with this sighing apostrophe, " At least it is sweet to think that he could have loved me, had fortune permitted it !"

The night for Madame Krazau's departure was now fixed, and the day was to be spent all together at the Parsonage.

It was the last of the bowery month of June : Meeta had made every thing look pretty within the house ; summer and sunshine rendered all beautiful without.

When Mr. Vanderhoven entered with his companions into the large light parlour, where they were to dine, he stopt to pay more than his usual tribute of compliment and comparison upon the occasion.

The cloudless day was so hot, that every window had been set open; so adding the flowers and verdure of the garden to the flowers and evergreens in the room. No article of furniture had escaped Meeeta's passion for these natural decorations; except only the chairs they were to sit upon, and that ancient sanctuary of family taste and family pride—the buffet. Here Jemima gripped the sceptre—her hold being too tenacious for a gentler phrase, and in defiance of Meeta's boldest efforts, had succeeded in displaying her full glitter of venerable tankards, and parti-coloured china, without one intrusive beau-pot to mar their array. The clock, however, she had abandoned without concern; and there, the figure of Time, put out of sight by Meeta's roses and carnations, afforded Mr. Vanderhoven a happy opportunity of jumbling flowers and pleasures together, in a figure of rhetoric.

“ Miss Meeta is determined to com-

memorate this day, I perceive," he added, solemnly bowing to her.

"Yes," observed Adolpha, with quickness; "she has dressed it with a garland, like her own bright cheeks, as if it were a day of rejoicing!" She smiled as she said this, though something of a reproachful expression quivered over her features, and glanced through the tear in her eyes.

Meeta was pained and surprised, and had not voice to reply: her father, willing to make light of Adolpha's remark, asked whether it were not usual to dress victims with flowers? and Rupert whispered, "If Meeta's cheeks are like a garland, 'tis a dew-sprinkled one just now," directing Adolpha's attention to the big tears which already trembled there.

Adolpha must have felt the mild appeal of those tears, or the more serious rebuke of Mr. Aremberg's astonished look; for, giving sudden way to the strong feeling of impatient sorrow which had

probably been working in her all the way from Mr. Vanderhoven's, she threw herself sobbing upon Meeta's neck.

Madame Krazau, not unused to such hasty bursts of sensibility in the young creature, whose peculiar nature neither fashion nor education could wholly control, undertook to explain this : the explanation was, indeed, natural and easy : Adolpha had been so happy at Mariendorpt, she said, — so pleased with everything and everybody ; she was going away to a strange place, and knew not when all here might meet again : and she loved Meeta so exceedingly, that her sensitive feelings were hurt by the momentary fancy, that their regret at parting was not mutual.

All this, Adolpha, as she heard, confirmed by many a gasping affirmation, and many an ardent pressure of Meeta against her labouring breast. The tears, meanwhile, stole tenderly and softly down Meeta's blooming cheeks, as Madame

Roselheim, with her soul-subduing voice, and cheering smiles, every now and then uttered a few words that assisted in explaining, and excusing, and reconciling, and restoring all parties to composure:

Recovered from this embarrassing burst of ungoverned emotion, and expressing sincere contrition for it, Adolpha, all crimson with shame, yet trying to banter herself, invited Meeta to walk with her in the garden till dinner.

During their short promenade, many a strong assurance of mutual friendship was exchanged; and a lock of Meeta's beautiful hair was claimed by Adolpha, in recompense for the copy of Eustatia Vanderhoven's picture.

"And here is something not for yourself, my dear Meeta," she added, putting a small purse full of gold coin into her hand. "Whenever you see any poor creature, whose wants may require more than you can spare at the moment your-

self, will you do me the kind office of using this for me? I am the child of charity myself, you know, and must not forget my brothers and sisters in affliction."

Not even the present, upon which Meeta was yet bending her tearful eyes with a mixture of pain and pleasure, could be more welcome than this considerate donation. She felt, too, the delicate mode by which this more fortunate friend supplied *her* only want, that of administering freely to the wants of others: she felt that there could be nothing humiliating in thus becoming the almoner of a benevolent spirit; yet her colour heightened as she received the purse; and when she would have frankly expressed her own amiable reason for accepting such a gift, embarrassment chained her tongue.

It was the first pecuniary present Meeta had ever taken from any one; and she felt that reluctance about accepting

it, natural to youth upon such occasions ; — a reluctance which Providence has stamped upon every ingenuous heart, to form the safeguard of private independence, and of public good.

Adolpha interrupted her hesitating attempt at acknowledgment ; and, fixing her sparkling eyes upon her countenance with a mournful softness, in which their usual fires went out, she said, “ And now, Meeta, promise to write to me whenever an opportunity occurs, and tell me all the news of Mariendorpt—I mean, every thing that happens to those I am so sorry to leave. Keep nothing back, I charge you, from carelessness or shyness : — tell me every thing ; be sure I shall rejoice to hear of whatever makes all or any of you happy, be it what it may ; even —” she added, smothering a convulsive sigh in a forced laugh, — “ if it should be your marriage with — Mr. Vanderhoven !”

At the word marriage, Meeta’s senses were confounded ; for she expected that

name to follow, which she believed paramount in Adolpha's thoughts, as well as her own. At mention of Mr. Vanderhoven, she recovered, and forcing an air of badinage, said, he was too magnificent a prize for her to gain."

"I believe you may have whom you will, in this circle, Meeta," said Adolpha, relapsing into sad seriousness; "and if you have the power, I trust you know how to value it. — There are hearts here, o o sacred for trifling with." —

All in disorder, alarm, and concern for the supposed feelings of the agitated speaker, Meeta was going to abjure such wide influence, when the appearance of Mr. Aremberg advancing to summon them to dinner, checked her tongue. Adolpha hurried past him with an emotion so evident, that he would not hazard increasing it by a question; yet he went up to Meeta, who was still holding the miniature of Eustatia in her hand, and

who, hastening to put it in her pocket, dropt it just at his feet.

To lift it from the ground ; to start and gaze on it ; and, amidst a burst of hoarded feelings, to enquire how such a portrait was never known to him before, were the actions of an instant : the secret was confessed ; and having listened to it in affecting silence, Aremberg, who had all the time kept his eyes fixed upon the picture, sighing as if his heart would break, pressed it suddenly to that heart with startling vehemence, and thrusting it back into the hand of Meeta, bade her go into the house, and he would rejoin her after a single turn in the walk, alone.

Meeta seeing how deeply he was affected, obeyed him without remark.

When Aremberg re-appeared, the party were already seated at table : he took his place without speaking ; but, as he did so, his modest eye, which never spoke fully, except on great occasions, was directed for a moment towards Adolpha, with

such an expression, that Meeta thrilled with sudden fear for him, and sighed to think that Adolpha's heart was no longer to be won.

The late incident had settled the temper of the day: each individual of the company was thrown off their poise by it; all were, indeed, too truly attached to each other, not to feel their spirits unequal to exertion; and the certainty of an approaching pang poisoned present enjoyment.

Madame Krazau more than once dropt a melancholy foreboding, that she at least, should never sit at that peaceful board again; and Aremberg, plunged in a sorrowful reverie, sighed so often and so deeply, that he startled every one.

Meeta, observing the disquiet of his uncle and his friend, at this dejection, took an opportunity of whispering to both alternately, its probable cause, — the unexpected sight of Eustatia's miniature: his depression thus accounted for, they abstained from noticing it to himself.

After dinner, so much of the day remained, that such of the gentlemen as had regular employments, betook themselves to them for a-while ; Muhldenau retired to his study ; and Aremberg went out into the village, to attend some adult scholars, who were anxious to learn from him how to read the comforter of old age, the Holy Scriptures. Madame Krazau leaned back in her high-elbowed chair to rest her languid spirits ; while the other ladies sat down to useful needle-work. Mr. Vanderhoven told anecdotes of persons long gone to their graves, equally unknown to his hearers, as to fame ; and Rupert made sketches for Adolpha, of every object round Mariendorpt, of which she asked for a memorandum.

As her son made these slight drawings, and Adolpha received them, Madame Roselheim silently observed their very different manners. Adolpha sought and obtained these remembrances of the place she confessed to like so much, with an

agitated sensibility ill-dissembled under an air of girlish whim : Rupert indulged her in it with an easy good nature, which evidently sought no occult meaning in her conduct. It was clear, therefore that his heart was not on the watch, to translate Adolpha's regrets and inconsistencies, into a flattering feeling for himself.

“ She is then nothing to him ! ” Madame Roselheim thought pensively, — “ Poor Adolpha ! — and thy fate then, my son, is yet to be known. — Who is to win thee ? — Who deserves thee ? ”

Madame Roselheim's softened eyes moistened unconsciously, as she turned them alternately from Adolpha to Meeta, and from Meeta to Rupert. She lamented that the iron destiny of the two last, forbade her to wish her son sensible to the same sentiment which Meeta, she was too well assured, felt for him ; and with a mother's and friend's mingled dread and desire, she lost herself in imagining their future fortunes. Both were

nearly equally dear to her; and though she fondly believed the dearest of them free from that cruel torment, for which her heart was wrung with pity for the other, still she trembled lest, at some future day, he might become sensible to such touching tenderness, or love one, either too rich or too poor for their mutual happiness.

The weather at this period was unusually hot; and the present was one of those days, in which noon has the stillness of midnight. Not a breath of air stirred either the leaves of the vine, which obscured the light of one window; nor moved the freer branches of a huge walnut-tree, which through the other, cast a grateful coolness and its green shadow into the room. The humming of Meeta's bees, over beds of mignonette under the last mentioned window, was the only sound that came from without: their lulling murmurs by degrees closed the eyes of Madame Krazau, and civility to the

slumbers of an invalid, forming a plausible excuse for silence in the rest of the party, Mr. Vanderhoven stole down a book of prints, and each of the others retired into their own thoughts.

By the time the absent members of the party re-assembled, every one of them wore a more disengaged appearance; and as the evening came on, a gentle breeze began to move among the shrubs, and masses of magnificent clouds to float before the sun.

The heat, till now, had been too oppressive; but the present coolness was only the more delicious after it; and with one consent they removed into the open air.

While the others sauntered about, or sat down in the blushing, breathing garden, as inclination prompted, Madame Roselheim attentively led Madame Krauzau into the summer room by the water's edge, where the breeze was yet fresher, and some protection afforded against a

chill from the ground : there, the latter, seriously adverting to her fast-declining health, talked with regret of leaving Adolpha, though amply provided for, without a protector. She then besought Madame Roselheim to promise that she would go immediately to the forlorn orphan, whenever she should hear that Providence had taken her present friend.

“ And if my poor girl feels unwilling, at such a time, to remain in a scene that must be sorrowful to her,” said the invalid, dropping a tear, “ may I hope that you will take her back with you to Mariendorpt ! and keep her amongst you, till her spirits return, or till she bestow herself upon some deserving man : so he be but her equal in birth and merit, I care not ; and she is not ambitious, otherwise. — It is unnecessary to follow Madame Krazau through the little history of Adolpha’s rejected proposals of marriage, which she insensibly repeated, in the fullness of a heart, that partially

regretted what she professed to consider only with approbation ; her god-daughter's indifference to offered rank.

The lenient person to whom she addressed this, forgave the natural vanity of affection for its object ; and believed the kindness of Madame Krazau not the less sincere, that it was not managed more delicately. Touched with the generous encouragement this discourse evidently held forth to her son, and the freedom it bestowed upon Adolpha's inclinations, Madame Roselheim sighed to think that her Rupert was not likely to benefit by such rare disinterestedness ; yet she gave the promise required, both as a friend and a relative, accompanying it with expressions of soothing augury for the health of the invalid.

Madame Krazau shook her head, and sunk into dejected silence ; from which the entrance of the minister and Mr. Vanderhoven, roused her : after which, the

conversation assumed a more cheerful and less confidential turn.

Meanwhile, the younger part of the company rambled from the garden into the meadows, admiring the luminous changes of the sky, where volumes of snowy clouds were arranging themselves in glorious succession along the western horizon; promising a splendid spectacle, when the sun should reach their majestic heads. The refulgent orb itself, blazing like some angelic vision in its radiant car, from the centre of a glittering cloud, was rapidly descending towards these alps of Heaven: his glorious progress arrested the attention of the ramblers. The contemplation of so magnificent an object, drew their thoughts from their own immediate concerns, and Adolpha soon attended with evident interest, to the almost inspired language of Aremberg. His imagination, indeed, nay his heart too, was always particularly awakened, by speculations upon the phe-

nomena of the heavens ; and he now walked by her side, not coldly explaining the formation of vapours into the beautiful appearances they were witnessing, but talking of other worlds in other planets, with a holy earnestness which won her quite out of herself.

Meeta, to whom the subject of astronomy was rendered familiar by her father, and Rupert, who was never more happy than when transporting his friend into his finest mood, prevented Aremberg from stopping in his ardent course, by timely suggesting new subjects of poetical conjecture, or such as awaken a higher order of enthusiasm. During their walk, the sun sunk behind the embattled clouds, leaving their illuminated points, tinged with ten thousand vivid colours ; and as these changed, first deepening, and then wholly fading, the evening star was seen in the clear blue ether ; trembling above the high and darkened clouds, which now appeared like some

extensive fortress, stretching along the horizon in silent and solitary majesty.

The soft and silvery light of that single star, thus solemnly contrasted, threw a shade of pensiveness over the enthusiastic feelings inspired by the sunset and the equal glow of Aremberg's conversation, so that each of his youthful hearers sunk back into their own thoughts, when he ceased to speak.

Adolpha was the first to break their silence.

"When I shall next see that star," she said, — and stopt: her eyes were wet with tears. "You will think of us, I hope, my dear cousin?" said Rupert, pressing her hand.

"I promise you, we will think of you," and he sighed.

Aremberg, on the other side, murmured some words which Meeta did not hear, but she saw that he also pressed a hand of Adolpha; he touched that hand only an instant; Rupert retained the one he had taken.

Adolpha's emotion was excessive : she seemed scarcely able to support herself ; and Meeta thought she saw on her expressive countenance, the full effect of Rupert's undisguised tenderness. There was grief, there was joy in that countenance, — a something, in short, which seemed to say that Adolpha could at this instant have willingly yielded up life, satisfied with the bliss she then experienced.

Whatever the emotion was, it was potent enough to take from Adolpha the power of speech : Meeta felt her own heart withering ; but she found voice to tell their companions that they overcame her friend, and had better, therefore, leave them to walk back by themselves.

Aremberg then drew Rupert away, and turned with him towards a cluster of elms at a short distance.

When their figures disappeared among the trees, Adolpha lost all feeling of restraint, and burst into tears. Meeta pressed her hand in embarrassed silence ;

doubtful whether she ought or ought not to take particular notice of this second paroxysm of tumultuary feelings in her new friend; but unable to decide, and hesitating still, she gradually moved forwards with her, towards their home. She herself could not weep: though a dismal weight hung upon her heart, bearing down all its former fond fancies about love and Rupert.

“I know not what you will think of me, dearest Meeta,” at length Adolpha said; “you are sorry to part with us, yet can command yourself, and I cannot! — but you are staying, — I am going! — you, lose only one or two that you love, and I leave — many!” The passionate sigh which burst forth with this last word, Meeta too truly felt, belonged but to one of that many; and she could have echoed it for herself. She stifled, however every selfish consideration, uttering only words of grateful and cheering affection to her agitated companion.

By the time they reached the Parsonage garden, her soothing rhetoric had taken effect, and Adolpha, flattered with the assurance of being dear to every person there, became calm. For the remainder of the evening she was more thoughtful and silent than usual; but there was an expression of tender satisfaction, of tremulous expectancy in her eyes, which, while it made them infinitely more beautiful than when in their glittering dress, convinced Meeta that Adolpha was still thrilling with the recollection of Rupert's perhaps *first* testimony of deep interest.

After a longer absence than might have been expected, Rupert and Aremberg rejoined the party, now all collected in the summer-room, where part of them had been left. They also brought back serener faces than they carried away; and the short remnant of the time passed off more cheerfully, than might have been anticipated from their meeting earlier in

the day. Rupert talked with confidence of their all meeting again in health and happiness; predicted a speedy end to the war, to the marring of his advancement; and promised, whenever that should happen, to bring his mother to Alsace.

Madame Krazau sighed at this promise, as thinking she should not live to witness its fulfilment: yet she pressed their other surrounding friends to make a similar one; and at length won Muhldennau, to allow them the hope of a visit from Meeta, whenever either Mr. Vanderhoven or Madame Roselheim would undertake the journey with her.

During her share in this discourse, Adolpha now and then shone out with her customary brilliancy; although never once did she appear entirely that highly-polished creature she had appeared at first. Her sensibility was too completely roused, for the veil of courtly elegance to be long or easily worn: and as if hope or happiness conquered her more effectually

than despondency, she was evidently less careful than formerly, of the looks and language that betrayed her regrets.

Meeta saw, or fancied she saw, a tenderer expression than was wont, when he regarded his charming cousin, in the eyes of Rupert: the observation did not raise her spirits; and when her father called upon her to close the evening, and hallow the parting hour, by a favourite hymn, her voice was low and faltering:

She sang, however; and her own sweet voice, like the harp of David, or rather the confidence in her Maker's wisdom and goodness, which the words of her hymn breathed, banished the fiend of selfishness: and when she pressed Adolpha to her guileless breast, as they took leave of each other, it swelled with a sincere prayer for her happiness, even though that were only attainable by an union with Rupert.

As the travellers were to proceed by water as far as possible, for the accommo-

dation of Madame Krazau, for whom such a mode of travelling was prescribed, the small vessel they had hired to convey them up the Rhine, came to receive them at the landing-place of the Parsonage. All parties having previously agreed that it would be a wise plan to depart by night, when they might severally find solace for the pain of parting in probable sleep.

In the agitation of saying "good-bye!" Meeta could not observe any thing; and while she was repeatedly kissing Madame Krazau's hand, and renewing the promise of visiting Alsace, neither heard nor saw what passed between Adolpha and Rupert. The first thing she did hear, was an exclamation from the latter, expressive of a wish that he were thought well-enough to accompany them through their journey; and as he spoke, he turned a speaking look upon Aremberg. His friend, with habitual embarrassment, changed colour, and stood irresolute:

then, all at once addressing Madame Krazau, offered, rather than intreated her to accept his escort as a substitute for that of Rupert.

The proposition, at first, was not received as serious; then as gratefully acknowledged, as courteously declined: repeated by Aremberg; urged by Rupert: considered more leisurely; and finally accepted.

Meeta failed not to note, that until Rupert enforced his friend's offer, Adolpha's refusal was hasty and earnest: when *he* urged it, she smiled and yielded.

The short delay which this new arrangement occasioned, and the little bustle it caused, gave a livelier impulse to the whole party. Mr. Vanderhoven stood at gaze for some time, dubious whether it were not right for him to offer his attendance also. But business still claimed part of his cares; and exhorting his nephew to pay a double share of attention

to the ladies on his account, joined the general wonder, that none of them had till now considered the indecorum of suffering two unprotected women to proceed through the seat of war, provided only with the formulary of written protections.

Aremberg confessed that he had thought of such a plan, without having had the courage to propose it: but to him who had proposed it, the full honour of gratitude was decreed; and Adolpha, evidently elated by this last proof of her cousin's increasing interest in her, could mingle smiles now with her tears, as she parted from his mother and himself.

Their boat, filled with provisions by the care of Esther, and themselves laden with benedictions and regrets, the ladies were handed from the shore by Mr. Vanderhoven, who insisted upon being permitted to perform that last duty of a host.

Ever attentive to the health of her protectress, Adolpha was seen to lead her directly down into the cabin from the night-wind ; leaving Aremberg upon the deck, where he remained, as usual, abstracted from ordinary objects : for he seated himself upon a coil of rope, and having once kissed his hand to those on shore, threw down his eyes, and never raised them again, while the boat remained in sight.

As she saw him thus, Meeta could fancy the train of reviving recollections which employed his mind ; recollections, mixed unavoidably with sensibility to Adolpha's engaging sympathy. A romantic wish crossed her, as she imagined his gratitude for this sympathy ; thought of Adolpha's susceptibility to genius and goodness ; and calculated the hours, nay, days, they must pass now, nearly wholly together.

This wish was too closely allied to her own personal desires, to be indulged

uncensured ; and besides, Rupert's manner this very night, had testified something strangely like a change in Adolpha's favour : and if such change had taken place, ought she not to hail it with pleasure ?

Meeta turned from the water's edge, as she enquired this, expecting to behold Rupert lingering there, for a last glimpse of the departing vessel ; but she saw only her father, his white locks lifted by the night-wind, and a shade of sincere regret resting upon his mild brow.

“ Your head uncovered, dearest father,” she exclaimed, with a tenderly chiding voice, “ and the damps rising !”

Muhldenau turned back to the summer-room for his hat. “ We may be allowed to forget hats and head-aches, my child, when we are parting with friends whom we may never see again. Poor Madame Krazau does not seem long for this world !—that fine young creature will be left without a protector !

I confess I had hoped that she might have found one, in our invaluable Rupert: but that is not to be: he seems to have no thought of the kind; and she appears inclined to prefer his graver friend."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of Meeta, she could not have been more amazed; had the heavens opened before her, she could not have felt such transport.

"Prefer his friend!" she repeated, stopping, and fixing her actually-radiating eyes upon his placid countenance. — "What! prefer Mr. Aremberg to the son of Madame Roselheim!"

Muhldenau smiled. "Yes, my child! Dost thou not think the serious graces may prove as charming as the gayer ones? And dost thou not think that the man who was the chosen of Eustatia Vanderhoven, may well merit the affections of any other woman?"

"Yes — certainly — yes: but the possibility of such a thing, — never" — she

stopt, then resuming with sudden energy — “O no, my dear father, I am sure” — again she broke off, confused at the precipitancy with which she was about to betray a secret ; not confided, indeed, but equally sacred in the opinion of delicacy.

It must be remembered that Muhldenau had never been made acquainted with the settled conviction of Colonel Roselheim that Adolpha preferred his nephew, nor yet with the hopes and fears of Madame Roselheim on the same subject ; these had been imparted to Meeta, solely from one powerful motive, and Meeta herself was not likely to repeat them, unauthorized, even to her parent. Thus Muhldenau, looking on what was passing before him, without foregone prepossession, and having his discernment sharpened by parental wishes for his daughter's happy establishment in life, was not unlikely to see things as they really were. Any one who had passed

only a few days in the society of Adolpha at Mariendorpt, must have discovered that her affections were fixed somewhere ; they might differ about the object ; and that, just as another person's representation might have swayed them, or their own observations determined : but they must always have agreed upon the main point.

Accustomed to hear her father as she would have listened to an oracle, Meeta submissively attended to his remarks upon several little circumstances of evident emotion in Adolpha, when both the persons in question were present, and which might as properly be placed to Aremberg's account as to that of his more obviously-charming friend. She ventured, however, to state Adolpha's frequently-avowed belief that the mourner's heart was wedded to the grave of Eustatia ; and to notice her extreme awe of his character.

These arguments, Muhldenau's experienced mind received as supports for his own opinion. "Love is full of contradictions, my child ;" he said pensively, the vision of his youth passing at that moment before him, "its hopes and despairs have little of reason in them. If Mr. Aremberg's devotion to a lost object, had been a matter of personal indifference to this young lady, she, who is better acquainted with life than my simple, romantic Meeta, would never have believed in it."

Muhldenau then added some striking observations upon the particular attention Adolpha had from the first bestowed upon Mr. Vanderhoven ; a person of all others, perhaps the least likely to please an exceedingly polished woman, unless she were peculiarly interested in him, from the influence of a sentiment, which causes the heart to embrace every thing with fondness, that belongs to the object of its partiality.

Meeta listened with growing faith in what she heard; and venturing not to raise her eyes to her father's face, lest they should disclose the strange joy of her feelings, timidly asked, what Mr. Aremberg felt for Adolpha?

"I am not a seer, my Meeta;" he replied, smiling at her artlessness, "yet it seems to me, that our friend does not know his own heart just now; and would rather not know it. The besetting sin of the best hearts, my child, is perhaps *pride of constancy*: the martyrdom of one's whole life, for the sake of a dear and lost object, has its glory, — and its sweetness too," he added, with a profound sigh; "and there are circumstances which sanctify such martyrdom, I hope; — years of union — of blessings bestowed, — of sacrifices made for us by the angel of whom we are bereaved; — but I wander from our subject, Meeta." Muhldenau had unawares glided from a review of another's feelings, into a vin-

dication of his own ; and he found it necessary to pause awhile, ere he could resume in a cheerfuller accent.

“ I have noticed unusual disturbance in our friend’s looks and manner all this day ; and he certainly appeared so extremely moved and embarrassed, when the proposal was made for his accompanying the ladies, that I hope one of them is of much more consequence to him, than he clearly perceives : she could not trust her happiness in better hands !”

“ Impossible !” said Meeta energetically, yet all bewildered between doubt and delight.

“ I may tell thee, now, my child,” said her father, stopping in his walk, and taking her hand seriously within his, “ that I had wished *thy* happiness so placed : — Mr. Vanderhoven’s generous purpose has of late been so evident to me, that I could not but wish the same thing. There would have been affluence

for thee, high character, talent, fixed principle, excelling goodness, and all bounteously, freely offered ; without one alloying feeling, on that side where some pride of wealth and patronage might be expected and pardoned — but Heaven has seen fit to order it otherwise ! Mr. Aremberg's affections lean to a different object ; and thrice-blessed be God for it ! I have noted thee, my child, in Mr. Aremberg's company ; and that, which used to cause me a little regret then, is now my comfort."

At the last sentence Meeta trembled with undefinable apprehension ; then flinging herself upon her indulgent parent's neck, she exclaimed, " O my dear father, never wish so for me again ! — I ask but to live and die in my dear home : — never wish your poor Meeta to leave you."

" But since I must leave thee, my child," he said, in a lower voice, " let me hope, that I may see thee placed with

honour and comfort in a home of thine own, ere I go to my home, the resting-place of thy mother!—When I die, Meeta, knowest thou not, that——” he could not finish the picture of desolate forlornness, which he contemplated for his orphan daughter.

Deeply affected by the image of his death, and struck with the dread that he was about to propose some new candidate for her hand, Meeta stood for a space, silent and trembling; at length she said in a hesitating, hopeless voice, “Is there then any other person, that I am so unfortunate—I mean, that I please sufficiently, to——.”

Muhldenau understood her interrupted meaning, and hastened to say that there was not one amongst the remaining few of their immediate intimacy, to whom he would wish to see her joined in so sacred a relation as that of marriage. He spoke not of Rupert; because he was so accustomed to consi-

der him in the light of an actual brother to Meeta, that he never thought of forming a wish upon the subject.

Meeta was by this time weeping violently : her tears flowed from many sources, — grief and gladness, love for her father, and abhorrence of herself. She felt as if guilty of a sin in suffering him to believe her what she was not, — free in heart ; yet how was she to own the humiliating secret ? How was she to bear the pain of so afflicting him ? Shame and filial affection alike chained her tongue ; and while contemplating the sad image he had before conjured up, she felt that no other deprivation or disappointment, could deserve the name of a calamity.

But no other heavy calamity menaced her now ; and had she searched her soul thoroughly, she might have found that the belief of not having a rival in Adolpha, the suspicion of being secretly dear to Rupert, the certainty therefore

of not being called upon to support the anguish of seeing him the husband of another, were the true causes of her present indifference to such imagined trials. Muhldenau chid himself for having thrown this gloom over their discourse; recalled the many unexpected mercies he had received at the hand of Providence, counted up the number of tried friends to whose kindness he could confidently bequeath his daughter's interests, and concluded by a few playful predictions about his own prolonged age, and the reverence he would then exact from his grand-children.

Meeta's loving and lovely eyes shone with rainbow-brightness through their dispersing tears; and still hanging upon his shoulder, while his arm encircled her slender waist, she proceeded in silence, but with reviving cheerfulness, towards the house.

Her thoughts, meanwhile, returned to the subject which had produced all this

emotion, — the asserted attachment between Aremberg and Adolpha: as she reflected upon it, she was astonished to find that most of her own recollections, now that a new clue was given her, tended to strengthen her father's observations. She remembered the melancholy pleasure with which Adolpha used to invite from her, frequent details of the buried Eustatia; and of Aremberg's past life: she reflected that no common interest in the latter, could have induced Adolpha to undertake the task of copying the picture even for Meeta; and perhaps her wish to resemble that picture, might be less, because Rupert admired it, than because it represented the sort of countenance most pleasing to Aremberg.

Meeta did not ask, from what sprung this favoured heiress's evident anxiety to advance the fortune of Rupert? The reason for such anxiety might be found in the pure feeling of gratitude for his

mother's generous succour of her family in their days of distress; added to her own obligation for the preservation of herself and Madame Krazau, from a fearful death.

Meeta could not forget that Adolpha, who rather owed her life to Aremberg than to Rupert, had more than once described his share in the awful scene upon the tower of the Ockholmer church, and his riveting, pious eloquence during the sacred ceremony which she had witnessed previously in the church itself, with remarkable sensibility. His display of Christian heroism, in the first instance, might well have stamped on a heart even less susceptible to excellence, an impression which not even the finer graces, and equal worth of his younger companion, could efface. The pity afterwards demanded by Aremberg's sad story, told by the partial tongue of friendship, was likely enough to join deep interest with enthusiastic admiration. Thus according

to Meeta's newly adopted theory, had the refined and court-bred Adolpha become devoted to one, otherwise unlikely to captivate such a person on a short acquaintance; one too, whom she believed wedded to the ashes of another.

Fain would Meeta, after recapitulating these evidences, have discovered as many indicative of the same sentiment on the part of Aremberg: but except the scanty testimony of greater disturbance in his manner of late; his deep sensibility to Adolpha's share' in increasing the memoirs of her he loved and lamented; and lastly, his agitated, embarrassed mode of offering a kindness which common courtesy authorised; except these testimonies she had nothing to remember. She could but hope, and wish, and pray, that if he were ever to admit a sharer with Eustatia's memory in his heart, that sharer might be Adolpha.

In the midst of these reflections, Meeta

entered the house : their force and tendency she felt immediately ; for as her eyes encountered the just-lifted one of Rupert, whatever was the expression there, it caused her such an emotion of joy that it was too evident she must now guard against the dangerous idea of being free to love him : for whatever was left, whatever withdrawn, her obligation to self-conquest remained the same as before ; and Rupert, unattached to any one, unsought by any one, — nay, Rupert even at her own feet, was an object from which she ought, in honour, to fly.

Thus deciding, she turned her steps another way, and went up to Mr. Vanderhoven, who was waiting to bid them good night ere he returned to his desolate abode. The night was by this time somewhat advanced, yet they wasted another hour of it in conversation about the friends that had just left them ; after which they separated, some to think, and some to dream, of these valued persons.

CHAP. V.

THE family at the Parsonage easily returned to their tranquil habits of constant occupation and amusements, which had been suspended by the sort of carnival weeks just gone : they talked over that time in their evening walks with pleasure and regret, but the termination of it did not desolate them as it did Mr. Vanderhoven. He wandered over his altered house lamenting the absence of his nephew, and the loss of that bright and elegant being, whose refined attentions had flattered his self-love even more than he was aware, and whose sprightly sallies were ever ready to second his own less happy efforts at wit and gaiety.

Muhldenau, who was often the confi-

dant of these lamentations, never failed to join in them, to praise the best qualities of Adolpha, and thus to prepare Mr. Vanderhoven for a pleasurable, rather than a painful surprise, should her fascinations eventually baffle his generous intentions towards Meeta.

As some compensation for that valued guest, Father Joachim now forsook his solitude, and claimed Mr. Vanderhoven's participation once more with his botanical pursuits. Julian, like a young bird released from short thralldom, flew about with the innocent transport of first happiness. It is true, that during the period of the foreign ladies' visit, he had walked daily in the garden with his tutor, and received visits daily from his friends at the Parsonage; but till this time he was not permitted to go to them. He might not pass whole hours with his arms round Madame Roselheim's neck, while she repeated to him the beautiful story of Joseph and his Brethren, in the very

phrases of Scripture ; nor sit at her feet arranging the sewing-silks for her and Meeta ; nor establish himself by his brother's side, while the latter taught him the first rudiments of drawing : all this Julian had been debarred of lately, and even now, whether it were not easy for the Franciscan to rid himself of a habit, his pupil found himself still under a species of restraint, not laid upon him when he first arrived at Mariendorpt.

Rupert made the same observation ; but the only remedy he sought, was that of offering no opposition to what might die away of itself, if not rooted by resistance : he therefore left the Franciscan to recover by degrees from such an ungracious mood. Many days, however, did not elapse ere the general mortification upon this subject, and the regrets occasioned by the departure of Adolpha were lost in alarming anxiety of a different kind.

The Franciscan, after having been twice to receive the confession, and to give extreme unction to a dying Catholic in a distant village, returned after the second visit, heavy, languid, and shivering. As the day proceeded, he complained of unusual lassitude and excruciating pains through his whole body; but attributing these sensations to a probable cold, he treated himself accordingly. The next day being a fast (upon which occasions he abstained, not merely from food, but from society,) no one had an opportunity of observing the progress of his indisposition; therefore, when Rupert saw him early the ensuing morning, he was concerned to find him infinitely worse: drowsiness, coldness in the extremities, and obvious aversion of food, were symptoms he failed not to remark with much uneasiness to the sufferer himself. Father Joachim roused on Rupert's anxious questionings, and promised, in

consequence of them, to see a physician, unless the morning might produce a favourable change in his sensations.

Impressed with the idea that a fever of some sort threatened his friend, Rupert was not taken by surprise when a billet was brought to the Parsonage only a few hours afterwards, praying Muhl-
denau's or his attendance immediately, and explaining the reason for such a request. Having taken alarm at his own symptoms, and having, on private enquiry, through a servant, discovered that a child had but just died of the small-pox in the house where he had last been, Father Joachim could have no doubt but that it was this fearful disorder which was now appearing in himself. About his own life or death he was piously indifferent, but anxious to preserve Julian from infection, he wrote to the minister of Mariendorpt, stating his condition, and praying him, if his family had severally gone through the disorder, to come and

take the unconscious innocent under his roof, and, at the same time, find some fitting place to which to remove the Franciscan himself.

Muhldenau's first step was, to question the different members of his little household, upon the important subject. Christy, who had never had the small-pox, was directly ordered out of the house for a time ; and, though Muhldenau, from his hurried life in former years, and his wife's early death, knew not whether Meeta had ever gone through it, he had accustomed her and himself to put their trust in Heaven ; neither braving actual danger, nor shrinking through fear of it from occasions of benevolent usefulness. To her, therefore, amongst the first, not doubting her answer, he put the question, whether he should, or should not, grant the Franciscan's request?

Meeta's cheek blanched for one instant ; but the colour returned to it the next. While with generous rashness, she

declared her eagerness to have Julian removed from danger at any risk.

Rupert's eyes met her's at the moment, and there was that, in their momentary, beaming fixture, which overpaid her beforehand for all she might incur hereafter. Rupert, however, was not inclined to let her take the hazard of her enthusiasm : and expressing infinite dismay at the uncertainty of her situation ; attributing all the impending evils to himself ; he voted for her removal to some neighbour's house, until Julian's freedom from infection might be ascertained.

To this Meeta would not consent ; though his mother enforced it with a passionate pleading, foreign to her usual moderation. The sickness of Julian, if he were to be sick, must, she knew, throw their diminished household into confusion ; as it must employ Madame Rosenheim day and night, and leave the venerable minister without a fit superintendent of his domestic concerns ; without,

indeed, a companion for his hours of relaxation. She urged the improbability of the contagion having been already communicated to the child, his governor being so soon aware of the necessity of caution ; and she promised equal caution in the management of herself.

Her father feebly contended on her side for a while ; for the father was too strong in his heart, for his resistance to be continued : he yielded gladly to the middle course suggested by Madame Roselheim ; and Meeta was, therefore, sentenced to a sort of banishment from that dear friend and her nursling, until the presence or absence of the disorder in him could be certified.

Trembling with almost a mother's apprehensions for the little creature, Madame Roselheim would now have gone immediately to bring him from the scene of alarm ; but Rupert recalled her to a sense of the propriety of different conduct. If Julian's escape from that

cruel malady were to be hoped, those who attended upon him must refrain entirely from the decidedly-infected room of his governor.

“So that — but it is a cruel sentence I am going to pronounce!” he said, gently withdrawing her arm from his; “so that you must allow me to banish myself from all here, as long as our poor friend requires a nurse. You and Meeta will take care of our darling. Your office, dear Sir,” he added, seeing Muhldenau about to offer his services in Father Joachim’s chamber, “is to pray for us meanwhile. Remember that you belong to your flock.”

The minister bowed his meek head, and sighed. “And you go, my son, to establish yourself by the sick bed of Father Joachim!” exclaimed his mother, turning deadly pale. “Gracious Heaven! if it should not prove the small-pox! — if it should be one of those malignant fevers!”

“ And what then, my mother !” asked Rupert, cheerfully, with an expression of countenance which made his soul visible to the eyes of Meeta : “ duty, dear mother, duty is the watch-word you yourself have taught me. Would you have me disgrace your own lessons ! Come, smile, dearest mother : in camp, we all take our turn in the hospitals, and many a line of fever-beds have I passed through ; and yet, here I am.”

There never was much of the heroic in Rupert’s choice of phrases, but the sentiment often appeared in what he said : he always thought less of showing himself, than of satisfying others ; and literally believed, that there was no merit, nor marvel, in a man doing his duty.

Touched by this simplicity of goodness, Madame Roselheim looked on her son till her eyes overflowed ; she did not speak, but she waved her hand for him to go, and she turned her head towards Meeta. The smile that beamed through

the tears of that speaking face, seemed to ask Meeta's admiration of her excellent son; asking admiration of her who admired him only too intensely!

Ah, poor Meeta! how easily wast thou to be vanquished by the least ray of hope! Repressed love rushed over her anew, with torrent force, while she remembered her father's predictions concerning Adolpha and Aremberg, and fancied this look from Rupert's mother sprung from a similar conviction, and gave her leave to love him.

Madame Roselheim, the moment she saw the kindling look of her companion, felt her own indiscretion; she felt too that to live with Rupert, and not to love him, was impossible; and, while she pitied, therefore, more deeply than ever, she who did so thus unwisely, she tried to hide the additional tenderness which this pity excited in her towards its object.

A few moments' consultation after

this, decided that Muhldenau was to proceed with Rupert to Mr. Vanderhoven's, for the purpose of communicating the disagreeable information to that gentleman, learning his opinion about the removal of his guest, and then providing for it. They then hurried away, leaving Madame Roselheim and Meeta, to engage directly in preparation for Julian's reception.

On reaching the infected house, Rupert ascended at once to the Franciscan's apartment, while Muhldenau went in to Mr. Vanderhoven, as had been previously arranged. The latter gentleman was struck with dismay, when he heard what was likely to occur. He had suffered much from that frightful disease in early youth, and had often been heard to say, since then, that if it were to be caught again, he should certainly take it, were he ever placed in contact with a person labouring under its horrors.

He now besought indulgence for the unworthy cowardice he must plead guilty to, and professed his intention of immediately leaving his country-house, for the one of business which he had in Utrecht; whence he would dispatch a celebrated physician to the succour of his unfortunate guest, whom he desired might on no account, be disturbed or removed.

The worthy man would not listen to any of those apologies and expressions of deep obligation from Rupert, with which Muhldenau was charged on this distressing occasion: he exonerated him from all blame, however remote — said it was one of those unforeseen calamities which Providence dispensed at will; only regretted the absence of his nephew at such a time, and renewed his avowal of shame at his own incapacity to fulfil all the duties of hospitality, by remaining with his sick guest.

His house and all it contained, with

the exception of such of his domestics as were afraid of the disorder, he left at the disposal of Father Joachim's immediate attendants. Such kind heartedness might well overbalance the infirmity of his spirit respecting his personal safety ; and the considerate Muhldenau, soothing his self-censure, therefore, urged him to expedite his departure that very night.

Leaving him to this needful business, the good minister then hastened to communicate such parts of their conversation to Father Joachim, as might tend to set his mind at ease, and reconcile him to remain where he was.

He found the Franciscan lying along his bed, though not undressed ; Rupert seated at the foot of it : Julian, silent, and wondering, was standing by an opened window at the remote end of the long apartment, evidently in obedience to his governor's orders, — a me-

lancholy silence reigned amongst them. Muhldenau, in obedience to the anxious invalid, executed his commission at too great a distance from the bed, to receive any of the polluted air upon his garments. Father Joachim listened attentively, noticing some passages of the benevolent address, by signs, not words. When Muhldenau concluded, he said, after a short lamentation over the perplexity and inconvenience he was causing to persons upon whom he had no claim, “and now, worthy Sir, I know no better way of thanking you and our excellent host, for all your kindness to strangers and prisoners, than by assuring you, that I pray for you both, always and earnestly. As the strongest proof of my esteem, I now commit that child into your hands; not doubting that you will hold the deposit sacred. I am about to enter upon an awful disease — it may lead me unto death : act so, therefore, with regard to

that child, that whether you and I meet again before earthly witnesses, or at the judgment seat of God, you may be able to meet me with a conscience void of offence towards him." "This good Samaritan," he added, laying his hand upon Rupert's, — he would not call him Christian, — "this good Samaritan believes it his duty to attend on me during my illness. Jesus forbid that I should prize his body more than his soul! — he will advance a step nearer heaven by it, — and, perhaps —." A hectic colour crossed the Franciscan's cheek as he interrupted himself disclosing his secret thought, and his fear that it might be guessed at. It was evident that he looked for Rupert's conversion by the circumstances of his sick-bed; and hoped much from old associations, when he should unavoidably hear the objects of his early faith, invoked by a dying man. Father Joachim

speedily recovered from this temporary confusion, and resumed: —

“ Julian will therefore be deprived of his care as well as mine. Should infection be already communicated — you understand me, Sir! — for the love of our blessed Virgin, — pardon me, — for the love of God, be unto him —. I rely on you and that excellent matron.”

The Franciscan paused, to prevent his affliction of mind from being too apparent: but while he did so, his eyes, which were already beginning to inflame with the fire of his complaint, cast many a troubled glance towards Julian.

Muhldenau hastened to give every possible assurance of affection for his little charge, and of obedience to the Franciscan's instructions; he pledged himself as a Christian and a father, to a conscientious fulfilment of the obligation thus imposed upon him; and commending his Catholic brother to the healing power of

the only unfailing Physician, advanced to claim his trust.

Among the few things said by the good minister to induce the child to depart quietly with him, Julian seemed only to hear that his governor wished it. His affectionate heart had not room for the offered images of pleasure and caressing in the persons of Meeta and Madame Roselheim; he thought only of his governor sick, and Rupert sad, and prayed so earnestly to be suffered to stay and keep them company, promising, so lovingly, neither to stir nor speak unless told to do so, that it was evident the Franciscan's tenderest feelings were sore assaulted.

But something of reserve or pride still enabled the latter to command himself; and pronouncing a short exhortation to the attentive little creature, he bade him farewell.

The docile child, accustomed to obey,

though pale and ready to weep, was running forward to embrace his governor, when Muhldenau's extended arm, and the former's authoritative voice, at the same instant arrested him midway.

There was something thrilling in the tone with which the sick man called upon Julian to stop. At this sad and awful moment, when they might be parting never more to meet, love gave him courage to bear the pain of seeming cruel to the object of its fondest care. The poor child stood for an instant with cheeks flushing, and heart labouring; then all at once bursting into a passion of tears, and running back to Muhldenau, he threw himself into that good man's arms.

Rupert now spoke, checking his first impulse of hastening up to the little weeper, and having soothingly repeated the reasons for their seeming unkindness

to the child they all loved so tenderly, succeeded in restoring his composure.

Julian ceased to sob, and sliding down from Muhldenau's breast to the ground, clasped his little hands together, and repeated on his knees the first prayer his young heart had ever formed of itself. He uttered only a few of the simplest phrases of petition ; but their very simplicity rendered them affecting, and he for whom that artless prayer was offered up, could no longer prevent the tears from rolling down his cheeks, and could with difficulty restrain himself from calling him to his last embrace and blessing.

Wholly overcome, his voice broken, every muscle of his face working, he once more bade the weeping boy farewell, exhorted him afresh to obedience, and the practices of their religion ; and repeating that it was from kindness, not harshness, he forbore to add kisses to his parting benediction, he motioned him mournfully away.

Hushed into silence by habitual reverence for his governor, the little Julian suffered himself to be carried from the room without further resistance ; but the moment the door was closed on him and Muhlidenau, his complaining voice was heard like the bleat of a lamb taken from its mother, till the sound becoming fainter and fainter as he was borne along the passage, it finally ceased, or was audible no longer.

The Franciscan's hollow eyes remained long fixed upon the door through which Julian had gone : when he withdrew them, which he did with a prolonged sigh, they were sadder than before, though now tearless. He did not speak ; but he crossed himself several times, and was for many minutes evidently occupied in prayer.

Rupert felt that the sick man believed he had taken his last look of the gentle child ; and, penetrated with sympathy,

as well as occupied by many an anxious thought, he too remained silent.

In the space of another hour, Mr. Vanderhoven and some of his household were heard to go away in his barge for Utrecht; Rupert then administered a medicine, and mixed a cooling drink for his patient, by the latter's directions; and having seen him peaceably disposed for the rest of the night, at his urgent intreaty threw himself down upon a mattrass in an outer chamber.

CHAP. VI.

THE Franciscan's opinion of his own state proved accurate: on the fifth day from his first indisposition, certain spots appeared upon his skin, confirming the fact of his having taken the small-pox; and that of a malignant sort.

Rupert beheld those fearful witnesses, and heard the decision of the Utrecht physician with a sensation at heart beyond all he had ever felt; in truth, it was unlike all he had ever felt; for it was horror mixed with pangs of conscientious misgiving.

In the first perturbation of his spirits he was ready to tax himself with the guilt of being accessory to the Franciscan's residence in a country where it

was probable he had taken his death : but as he reflected upon the subject, juster thoughts arose, and he acknowledged that as no other motives had influenced him, except kindness and consideration for his prisoners in the choice of their abode ; nay, as he had declared the Franciscan free, he might lament the consequences as a misfortune, but not repent them as a crime.

His anxiety, lest Julian had not escaped infection from contact with his governor's clothes, or approach to his breath, was as agitating as that of Father Joachim himself ; whose repeated enquiries respecting the health of the child, he was however happily qualified to answer satisfactorily, from daily reports made by the inmates of the Parsonage.

Entrance to the house itself had been interdicted from the first ; so that it was only for a few moments, at different periods of the day, he could exchange enquiries with his mother, or Meeta, or

the venerable minister, below his window. Except the occasional sight of Dr. Ostermann, who now lived in the house, but with whom he had no other intercourse than during the latter's visits to the invalid, Rupert associated with no one. He devoted himself to the sick room day and night, with a feeling of duty which no prediction about his own health could shake ; even Meeta's deeply-anxious look, as from beneath his opened window she gazed up at his pale and languid face, could not beseech him into less self-devotion.

Yet, though this pain was mixed with them, sweet were these moments to Meeta ; for the sight of her, still untouched by the malady he dreaded, caused Rupert such joy, and the continuance of that dread excited such tenderness in him, that every time he saw her, a softer and more familiar fondness of look and language, established itself between them. Even the ordinary phrase at parting, of

“ God bless you,” uttered by each, as the one retired from, and the other closed the window, thrilled both their hearts with the same consciousness : but they could not dwell on that consciousness ; perhaps they durst not ; lest such reflection should lead to the sacrifice of what formed now, the principal part of their scanty happiness.

Madame Roselheim, who was never present at their brief meetings, and whose heart was divided between anxiety for Julian, and apprehension about her son, had no suspicion of the rapid progress which a hitherto-latent feeling was making in his breast. She left her little charge at the Parsonage every morning for a few moments, that she might behold Rupert’s face, exhort him to take care of himself, and recommend him to the protection of Heaven. Her tender accents were his soul’s music ; they calmed all his agitations, they could at any time banish every image, except her own, from his

heart, and make him forget the lover in the son.

But neither she nor Meeta were long destined to cheer his forlorn situation with their looks and words. Some billets, unknown to Rupert, passed between the Parsonage and Dr. Ostermann on the subject of Julian, in whom certain symptoms of listlessness and chilliness began to appear, and panic-strike his friends. Other sure tokens succeeding, the physician no longer hesitated in pronouncing the child infected with the complaint; consequently declared, that all precautions for keeping the inmates of the two houses separate were superfluous; and that he might visit the several sick chambers without injury to either of his patients. At this second shock, though communicated kindly by the doctor himself in the anti-room of the Franciscan's apartment, Rupert was completely dismayed; a throng of afflicting consequences rushed on him at once. Julian's death—

the woeful account he must render up to his father—he sat down for a while quite speechless.

During that brief interval, other agonizing thoughts intruded, and uncertainty concerning Meeta brought with it new images of death and domestic desolation.

These racking thoughts were followed by an instant apostrophe to heaven: it was said aloud and unawares; but quickly recollecting himself, and reddening at his own abstraction, he consulted with Dr. Ostermann upon the propriety of withholding this new calamity from the knowledge of their invalid.

It was soon decided between them that deceit was sometimes sanctified by the motive. Increased fear, produced by increased agitation, might cost the sick person's life; and Rupert was therefore, instructed to keep the whole affair secret.

Luckily for the fate of this secret, his countenance could no longer be examined by the eyes of Father Joachim : those keenly-penetrating eyes were now completely sealed by the disorder ; and his attendant's only care was how to steady his voice, and mould his sentences, when he should reply to the earnest and embarrassing questions of Julian's governor.

Such questions were the sole remaining proofs of the Franciscan's interest in the affairs of this world. Aware of his situation, and hourly feeling the powers of life exhausting by the various evils of his direful malady, he employed his intervals of ease and unclouded reason in preparations for another state.

Rupert was at length told that the recovery of his poor friend was no longer to be expected ; and with feelings of unutterable concern, mixed with bitter regret at his own remote share in the melancholy catastrophe, he devoted his

principal care to the spiritual comfort of the dying man. By his request, the Catholic priest, whose ministry he had himself attended in former days, was induced to come often to Mariendorpt, though the way was long, and the weather oppressive. The weather was, indeed, nearly insupportable ; at least in a sick chamber, from which, according to the baneful practice of those times on such occasions, all outward air was excluded, the fervour of Midsummer days and nights was almost like that of the Sirocco wind,

Yet without doors, shade and pure air were attainable to those who might seek them ; although the cloudless sun, shining in a clear blue sky, a garden red with roses, and successions of sportive swallows skimming over the canal below, were but mockeries to the self-imprisoned and much enduring Rupert, who passed half the sultry day in fanning the burning and disfigured face of the

invalid; thinking meanwhile how much more of mental courage and true heroism are required for the ordinary duties of life, — for those which are done without show, and pass away without observation, — than for such as the performer boasts of, and a world applauds.

In these reveries, his heart involuntarily turned oftener and oftener towards Meeta, whose perilous situation and magnanimous tenderness, kept him in a state of mind little favourable to the tranquil regard with which he sought to consider her.

It is true, that both her father and his own mother were little likely to let her break through the solitary restraint imposed upon her personal freedom; but so long as she was in the same house with Julian, his heart could not find rest. The subtle nature and quick communication of the poison he dreaded, were terrifying to imagine; and that blessed secret was not then known, which our

pitying Creator has since vouchsafed to reveal ; by the knowledge of which millions have been rescued from deformity and death ! millions from loss and lamentation !

Rupert brooded over these thoughts, without venturing now to expel them : anxiety for Meeta's safety appeared to him only a small atonement for the danger she incurred through his means ; and believing that less solicitude respecting her would have been a crime, he insensibly yielded himself up to the fullest sway of a sovereign affection.

Happily for those about him, in proportion as Father Joachim seemed to believe himself nearer his end, his reliance upon their truth and benevolence increased. He frequently pressed Rupert's hand with affectionate emotion, beseeching his forgiveness for past suspicion, and as often interrupted his muttered devotions, by repeating, in a penetrating tone, " I am praying for you, my son — I am praying for you."

Rupert could hear that these prayers solicited pardon for what the good Catholic considered his young friend's apostacy, and besought fresh light for his darkened soul. These prayers affected Rupert greatly, when the somewhat-indiscreet, and often-repeated attempts of the other Catholic priest to re-convert him, by feeble argument and severe anathema, only excited a smile.

Towards night, Father Joachim generally grew restless and uneasy; frightful dreams interrupted short slumbers, and he would awake in a state of unaccountable terror, which was the more afflicting to witness, when contrasted with the ordinary self-command of their victim, and with the just tranquillity of his conscience.

But even in the visions of distempered fancy, the child of his love seemed uppermost; and he would call out as if he saw that helpless innocent torn from him or Rupert, and then would awak

with the seizure so strong upon him, that it was long ere Rupert could convince him that those images were unreal.

Convinced only by being thoroughly, awakened, and patiently answered, Father Joachim gradually calmed, and fell evidently into deep thought about his own situation and its probable consequences. He would then commence a conversation with Rupert, respecting the latter's proceedings towards Julian and the Count of Rhinegravestein when he should be no longer in life ; in the midst of which he would wander again, and all coherency disappear in his thoughts and language. Then he would sink into stillness anew, only breaking it by intervals with this murmured exclamation, " No more ! — no more ! "

These words of sorrow or delirium, uttered in the silence and gloom of midnight, in a sick chamber, sounded like prophecy to the ear of Rupert : his heart echoed them ; for he fancied they

arose from the Franciscan's belief that he should never behold his little pupil again; and he often shuddered to think how soon he might have to pass from the death-scene of the present sufferer, to that of Julian himself.

As he thought thus, tears would steal down his cheeks, while he sat contemplating the fearfully-altered face of him he watched, with an oppression of soul for which his former life had no parallel.

Dr. Ostermann's visit to the Parsonage had confirmed the apprehension of its heart-struck inmates, and Julian was at this moment also stretched upon the bed of suffering and of danger.

Rupert, who no longer left his patient's bed-side for nightly rest, could only pray for those for whom he grieved; and alternately apostrophizing the Father of all, in their behalf, and ministering to the wants and wandering imaginations of the Franciscan, he wore out the dismal watches of several nights.

On one of the mornings after these ights, Dr. Ostermann, promising to remain with his patient, persuaded Rupert to go down into Mr. Vanderhoven's pleasure-ground for the refreshment of a few moments: he yielded, when he learnt that he should find the minister of Mariendorpt there.

The venerable man extended his hand to him in expressive silence; but Rupert immediately asked after Julian, and all the other inhabitants of the Parsonage.

Muhldenau returned the best answer he could frame with truth; adding, "An awful hand is upon us just now, my son! thy admirable, all-enduring mother!—but she will have her reward." Tears glistened in the good man's eyes as he proceeded to relate in what manner Madame Roselheim had judiciously endeavoured to avert the threatened evil, when no one else suspected the existence of it in Julian's system; and with what intuitive facility the suggestions of her

own good sense or experience had anticipated the regular practice of the physician.

“Thus, whatever were to be the event,” Muhldenau said, “every one interested in that sweet boy would be satisfied that nothing had been left undone.” This certainty would prove a consolation under the severest infliction; and he called Rupert’s attention to it in language suited to his sacred character.

But Rupert, who had hitherto never known a completely despondent feeling for himself; — Rupert, whose sunny temper usually brightened every subject he looked on, however gloomy; — was now wholly vanquished by his many causes for apprehension, and by the number of valued objects for whom he had to fear. As he turned his eyes upon the compassionate countenance of his comforter, and thought how soon he might be rendered childless; — as he imagined Meeta torn from life in the fulness of filial excel-

lence, or defaced in the perfection of youthful beauty, he could not restrain the rending sigh which burst from his heart.

Muhldenau heard this sigh, and comprehending some of its general import from the look which was fixed upon himself, he entered at once upon the subject of his daughter's perilous situation, and that of his own degree of alarm.

He observed, that as was evident in the case of Julian, who must have imbibed from his governor the poison of the malady they dreaded, almost as soon as the latter had taken it himself, he could not believe himself justified in sending a similar scourge into another family by the removal of his daughter. "She must trust in Heaven," he said, "and abide where she was; and all that her troubled friends could now do for her, consistent with their obligation to others, would be to continue excluding her from Julian's chamber, and proceed

in keeping out of her way whatever article of apparel or furniture had been used or worn in the infected room."

He assured him that Meeta was already under a regimen recommended upon such doubtful occasions; and that both he and she felt that she was in the hands of a good and gracious God, who would not lay more upon his creatures than they could bear, or that their soul's state required.

"Yet, if it should please him," he concluded, and would have said more, had not the image his pious meekness contemplated, been too afflicting for a father's heart to dwell on; and hiding his quivering features by the action that was necessary to brush away the sudden tear, he turned half aside.

If Rupert's face reflected the pangs of his soul at that moment, and if Muhldenau saw it, he could no longer be ignorant of the nature of the sentiment the former felt for Meeta; but his face

was turned another way, and Rupert did not trust himself with speech.

A tender billet from his mother he answered by a verbal message, doubting still whether a greater portion of contagion might not be communicated by exchanges of letters. Having at length found courage to exhort his venerable friend not to tempt Providence, but to use all lawful means for Meeta's preservation, as he would save him from the anguish of future self-arraignment, he charged him with renewed messages of affection to his mother, and bade him farewell.

Rupert's duty within doors, soon became painful beyond all former trials. As the day advanced, the Franciscan's worst symptoms heightened: the eruption assumed a more portentous appearance; his limbs began to swell frightfully, as the features of his face had previously done, and his skin seemed to burn the hand that touched it. The

poor sufferer wandered in mind more obviously than he had yet been heard to do ; and at each of his hot, quick breathings, Rupert felt like one respiring the scorched air of a furnace. The noisome vapours of death came in those breathings.

At these moments the gallant soldier's blood, never chilled by the dangers of battle, curdled with a sensation of horror: the solemn and thrilling certainty that Meeta was exposed to the chances of such a fearful death, palsied his whole frame. There were times when he called her father frantic or infatuated, presumptuous or self-denying to a crime, for suffering her to remain in her home ; and every instant on the point of flying to tear her from the fatal scene, at any risk to others, he felt the force of her power over his soul, when it could thus transport him into an agony of alarm, unknown even to a doting parent.

Those feelings, the total loss of all

hope for Father Joachim, the growth of his fears for Julian's life, besides many a heavy thought respecting his mother, would perhaps have over-mastered Rupert's fortitude; had not the return of Dr. Ostermann from his third visit to the Parsonage, brought him unexpected comfort.

Julian, indeed, was too surely advancing through the early stage of the malignant malady; but Ostermann had assured himself, and all concerned in the discovery, that Meeta must have passed through the whole of the disorder in her infancy.

Madame Roselheim, feeling, like her son, their awful responsibility to the father that might be made childless through kindness to them and theirs, had earnestly urged Meeta to inspect her own person thoroughly, and endeavour to discover there some mark which might relieve them from useless fears; or by the absence of such, authorise her maternal

friend in taking the power out of Muhl-
denau's hand, and searching for some
neighbour who might not fear to admit
Meeta into their house. Some marks
had thus been discovered on a part of
Meeta's shoulder, which in our freer
days, no lady's Abigail would permit her
mistress to wear covered; but in that
age of maidenly shamefacedness, it cost
Madame Roselheim many arguments and
entreaties, and Meeta herself more blushes
and tears, ere the latter could resolve
upon baring her ivory shoulder before
the grave and aged Dr. Ostermann.

The marks specified were no sooner
seen by the acute physician, than recog-
nised as sure proofs that she had passed
through the fiery ordeal during some
period of her father's absence from his
family.

After this confirmation of a doubtful
hope, Meeta staid only to receive per-
mission for unlimited freedom in conse-

quence ; and, rising from the breast of the maternal friend, whose arms had eagerly enfolded her after those of Muhl-
denau had pressed her again and again, the overjoyed girl hastened to her own apartment, there to bless God for a relief from those apprehensions natural to youth and health, and to thank Him for the liberty of dedicating herself again to the mother and brother of Rupert.

When Dr. Ostermann repeated this discovery to the young soldier, as a matter of congratulation for the escaped person herself, he did not see the sudden blaze of his auditor's face, for they were luckily conversing in the dark, near the door of the sick chamber. After a few seconds, to recover the management of his voice, Rupert returned a tolerably composed answer to this piece of information : but aware that his late solitary habits had led to the relaxation of better ones ; and that he often forgot now, when he was

thinking aloud in the presence of witnesses, he hastened to dismiss his companion.

Unspeakably grateful to Providence for this signal mercy, and rejoicing as truly for her father's sake as for hers and his own, he returned to take his station by the Franciscan's bed, with a heart lightened of one heavy load at least.

The Catholic priest, a man of narrow views, and less capacity in every way than his brother-religious, yet respectable for good intentions, was now in the sick chamber. He had hitherto visited Father Joachim only at distant intervals; but now that the disease had assumed a decidedly menacing aspect, he had regularly spent part of every night with him in prayer.

On Rupert's entrance, after his short conference with Dr. Ostermann, the grateful joy of his heart upon one subject imparted a more cheerful tone to his voice, and thus rendered it easier for

him to answer the Franciscan's enquiries after his pupil.

Those enquiries satisfied, the questioner restored his whole soul to prayer and self-examination.

Disease and sadness were now equally inmates of the two houses of Mr. Vanderhoven and Muhldenau. At the Parsonage, Meeta and Madame Roselheim took their alternate days and nights of nursing Julian; while Esther, true to the letter of her intemperate vow, but false to its spirit, slaved in the service of her lady, was indefatigable in doing every thing, and seeking for every thing that could lessen the fatigue of Madame Roselheim, or anticipate her wishes for the child's account.

It was Esther who carried the almost-hourly bulletins of the sufferers between the two houses; Esther who traversed the country round, in search of whatever her lady fancied might lessen the pain, or cool the palate, or please the senses

of the sick innocent ; Esther who supplied every absent person's place in the household. - But from Julian himself, Esther still kept aloof; preserving a solemn silence, when led into his chamber-door in the execution of her usual business ; although Meeta's lifted eye often detected that of the proud domestic, directed wistfully into the room; and fixed with pity and horror upon the changing face of the young sufferer.

A few days overspread that angel face with a mask so loathsome, that Meeta wept incessantly, while regarding it ; she wept too, whenever she met the gaze of his glazed yet still intelligent eye ; but when that, too, sunk behind the same ominous cloud, a chilling awe locked up her tears, and seemed to send them changed to ice into her heart.

Must it be confessed, that at first she shrank from the sight of Julian so

changed? The sad accompaniments of this sore disease, struck her senses with horror, and as she saw Madame Roselheim supporting the disfigured child upon her breast, holding his burning hands in hers, nor refusing to his parched lip, the kiss which his wandering and loving accents implored; she blushed at her own weakness, but allowed for that sentiment, "stronger than death," which gave Julian almost a son's rights in the heart of her maternal friend.

This natural shrinking, was however quickly conquered: the increasing suffering and danger of the little creature, banished every selfish delicacy, and Meeta's arms were soon as often his pillow as those of the sad and soul-struck Madame Roselheim.

Absorbed in her own afflicting pictures of what awaited his parents, that exemplary woman, when not occupied in speaking of, or acting for Julian, scarcely held any converse with those around.

Her deep and frequent sighs, the tear that suffused her eyes whenever Julian moaned or wandered, the half-articulate prayer with which she followed up every remedy she administered, the unspeakable tenderness and anguish with which her looks and voice overflowed, — these alone assured Meeta that in the person of his child, Madame Roselheim beheld her husband.

But Madame Roselheim had another cause for her silent grief. It was natural to such a heart, to wish that she and her son might be rightly understood; and without testifiers of their upright dealing towards Julian, a cruel suspicion might be fixed upon them. They might be supposed to have indulged in base revenge for blighted happiness and ravished rights, and have wreaked upon the person of a helpless innocent, committed to their care by the will of Heaven itself, the vengeance they could not

exercise over those of its culpable parents.

By this time the danger of the Franciscan had become so imminent, that Rupert could not once avail himself of that freedom to visit the Parsonage which the equally-infected state of both houses, unhappily permitted. He no longer stirred from his patient's bed-side even for a breath of common air; but Dr. Ostermann carried the details of each chamber to and fro; and Muhldenau, though prohibited from appearing before the Franciscan, because such a circumstance might lead him to guess Julian's situation, daily exchanged a benediction, and a message between Rupert and his mother, below the former's window.

On the morning of the fifteenth day from that on which Father Joachim was first seized, the minister of Mariendorpt went forth as usual to make his mournful en-

quiries at Mr. Vanderhoven's : he staid much longer than ordinary ; and when he returned, Meeta, who was below gathering some aromatic plants for the refreshment of Julian's chamber, saw him as he entered the garden-wicket from the mall. A single glance at his stricken countenance, sufficed to render the question she was about to ask, unnecessary. The herbs fell from her hand, and she stood before him unable to articulate.

Her father taking her hand, and giving it a hasty pressure, turned towards the summer-room, which he entered ; then sitting down, and looking up at her, said, " Yes, my child ! his sufferings are over :—we must now pray more earnestly than ever for that poor child !"

Meeta heard him in total silence : every thing within her was hushed ; and she sat for many minutes in that state of thrilled stillness with which the young always hear of death ; but when her father spoke again, adding some touch-

ing passage of the good Franciscan's last moments of consciousness, she burst into tears, which were violent and protracted, in proportion to their slowness of formation.

While she thus wept with the excessive sensibility of early sorrow, over the fate of an excellent man dying in a foreign land amongst persons of a different faith, — closing his eyes, a prisoner, and conscious to the sad certainty of leaving the creature he loved in the same forlorn situation, bitterer tears mingled with those of mere compassion; and the fear that Father Joachim's death might prove but the forerunner of Julian's, wrung her heart to absolute convulsiveness. She thought of her dear Madame Roselheim, of Rupert, of the sweet boy himself, till the anguish of apprehension becoming intolerable, she threw herself, as if sure of finding comfort there, upon her father's neck.

Muhldenau gently reproved this ex

cess of lamentation over the deceased stranger : but when he gathered from her sobbing replies what was the prime source of this paroxysm, he tenderly soothed it ; and saying something to revive hope, added much more to prepare her for submission.

Such judicious exhortations were gradually attended to, with more collection of mind ; and Meeta was at length sufficiently composed to ask further particulars of the Franciscan's death.

Her father briefly stated, that after a night of torpid freedom from former bodily pain, Father Joachim had breathed his last without a word, or perhaps consciousness, in the arms of Rupert. Muhldenau arrived not long after the solemn moment ; and had remained awhile, to give such necessary orders as might spare his younger friend a few additional feelings of a melancholy nature.

Rupert, he told her, had insisted upon staying to see the last attentions rendered to the corpse of the departed, and then resign his place entirely to the priest, who was expected by night-fall, to sit up with the body, and perform over it all the rites established by their religion.

“So at night, we shall have our poor Rupert back again, my Meeta,” said her father, rising to lead her from the summer-room: “he will come amongst us with a heavy heart; we must try not to make it heavier by our looks and words.”

Meeta promised obedience, and smiling cheerlessly, followed him up the garden.

When Madame Roselheim was made acquainted with the melancholy event that had just taken place, her first pang was for the object dearest to her in life: “Alas, my dear son!” she exclaimed, with piercing concern; then, after a mo-

mentary bewilderment, gave a grateful and tributary shower of tears to the memory of the Franciscan. But the death of a virtuous man was not in her estimation the appalling object which it appeared to the young and almost happy Meeta : she had too often contemplated death for herself, with chastened longing, to consider it now as an evil to the released spirit of another ; and the grief, therefore, which overspread her interesting countenance was nearly all for the living — for those who were left to upbraid themselves, unjustly, for being accessory to the Franciscan's suffering end.

Her well-grounded fears for Julian were aggravated by the present blow : yet ere she hastened back to his apartment, whence she had been summoned by Muhldenau, she found thought and voice for several honouring suggestions, concerning the last services still remaining to be paid to the departed. Her mind, ever present to itself when the welfare

or honour of those she loved was at hazard, instantly saw the necessity for provisions which were likely to escape the consideration of Rupert. She urged that he should lose no time in procuring a regular statement of his patient's case and treatment from Dr. Ostermann, with the due signatures properly authenticated, and dispatch this, by the Catholic priest to whom Father Joachim had confessed himself, to the Count of Rhinegravestein, requiring it to be examined and sanctioned, or censured by that nobleman's medical attendants. This might be accompanied by a verbal message, expressive of Rupert's anxiety, either to have his beloved prisoner removed from his care by the means of regular exchange ; or to have some other person sent to Mariendorpt in the place of Father Joachim, for the especial superintendence of Julian.

Madame Roselheim had scarcely finished this last instruction for her son, and

re-entered the sick room, than she felt how vain were such provisions for a juncture that might never arrive. Julian seemed much worse than he had been only a moment before ; and a succession of convulsion fits soon followed this alteration, warned those about him, to prepare for a yet sadder scene.

Dr. Ostermann was summoned ; and Esther, who had flown with the message, having apprised Rupert that if he wished to see Julian again, he must accompany her also, he flew from the house of death, with a speed that seemed to indicate his health had not suffered from his humanity.

As his mother saw him for the first time after the lapse of a fortnight, by Julian's bedside, his rayless eye and sunk cheek sent as piercing a pang to her heart, as her disturbed and fluctuating cheek did to his ; but neither of them suffered their thoughts, or eyes, or cares, to be diverted from the afflicting object

before them. In silent grief they heard and obeyed the different instructions of the physician, while the poor struggling, and now exhausted child, alternately claimed succour or support.

What a sight for Rupert, on whose sense was yet stamped the thrilling image of a recent death, and who no longer recognized in the blackened and swoln features before him, those of his soft and delicate Julian! — That voice, too, once so clear and tuneful, like the sweet ringing of a silver bell, was now faint and reedy, uttering at one moment hollow cries, and at another dismal moans.

Such a sight, such sounds, were more than Rupert could support: he closed his shuddering eyes, he turned away his head, as though by that vain movement he could shut out the poor innocent's doleful voice: but the dear, though altered face, was still present to his mind, and the sad sounds still pierced his heart through his ear.

Other visions passed before him. The memorable day of Julian's christening, — the strange accident which had on that proud day threatened the infant's life, — the tumultuous rejoicings of the peasantry, and, above all, the exulting looks of his magnificent father. And here, now, lay that child so greeted, so honoured, so preserved, — that child, the heir of so many dignities, dying in an obscure village in a distant country, an object of charity to strangers, and of compassion to his natural enemies!

Rupert's tenderness was but the more excited by those recollections; and as they swelled within him, he pressed nearer to Julian. Meeta marked the quivering of his eyelids, and heard the deep breath he drew at every sound of distress from his little favourite. Her tears fell like rain. Madame Rosenheim's anxious eye was tearless; but there was an expression in it, as she occasionally exchanged looks

with her son, and lifted it to Heaven, that was far beyond all ordinary testimonies of sorrow.

Dr. Ostermann had pronounced the present seizure of Julian a critical one ; so that every change in the little sufferer, from pain to ease, from rest to struggle, was fraught with importance. How did the hearts of those around him throb with grateful comfort, as they marked the gradual decrease of his convulsions ; and saw him at last laid quietly upon his pillow, relieved from severe pain, and conscious to kindness ! Dr. Ostermann drew a favourable presage from that circumstance ; and imparting his hopes to his companions, they were enabled to endure the awful uncertainty of the remaining hours till midnight, when the favourable effect of a medicine was completely ascertained ; the pulse of his patient lowered, and his breathing rendered freer.

"He will live now," said the physician, in the calm tone of a man familiarized with such scenes.

"He will live, said ye!" exclaimed Madame Roselheim, in a voice that asked the assertion to be repeated.

Dr. Ostermann did repeat it. Madame Roselheim heard, and then while her whole face brightly suffused, fell back with a gasping sigh.

Rupert carried her out in his arms into a passage; Meeta followed them, and in a few minutes their joint exertions restored her to animation. The mother and son then pressed each other in a speaking embrace; Meeta hovered near, looking with equal intensity of love upon both, and longing to mingle her pure rejoicing with theirs.

In the early days of their acquaintance, Rupert would have made her a sharer in the scene, by frankly extending a hand, and drawing her with brotherly affection

into the very embrace of his mother ; but now, only a thrilling look assured her, that in joy or sorrow her sympathy was precious to his soul.

Meeta's whole soul felt the agitating change ; and for a few moments Julian was forgotten, her own nothingness, Rupert's poverty, her past reasonings, resolutions, struggles, all were forgotten in one tempting conviction.

Madame Roselheim's gentle voice awakened her from her trance : it uttered words of thankfulness and affection to her ; and, while it reminded her to seek rest, avowed her own determination of watching till morning beside Julian, to enjoy more fully the certainty of his amendment.

To this advice Meeta had nothing to oppose, except her secret wishes to the contrary ; and, having returned into the sick room for a moment, to look at the now-sleeping child again, she motioned

a good night to all there, and retired with her father, to join the remainder of their little household in thanks to the Giver of every blessing.

Several hours of profound sleep confirmed the judgment of Dr. Ostermann: Julian awoke the next morning calm and refreshed. The eruption had assumed a less inflamed appearance, and the restless impatience which had hitherto changed his sweet temper as much as the cruel disorder had done his features, was replaced by his usual affectionateness, and delicate anxiety not to give trouble or excite pain. He now knew Rupert, and asked for his governor.

Rupert's lips could hardly frame a fitting answer; it was necessary to keep the tender-hearted child in ignorance of what had happened; and he therefore told him, that the physician as yet would only let his different friends visit him at distant intervals.

Julian trusted in what he heard, and was satisfied ; yet every now and then, in his innocent prattlings, he named his governor, and pierced all their hearts, by the happy confidence with which he anticipated a sight of him ere long.

None, except Meeta, were yet permitted to join Madame Roselheim and Rupert in Julian's chamber, lest he might be led to think his governor's exclusion a singular circumstance : her presence was necessary to assist and relieve this exemplary woman, who could not both minister to and amuse the languid child at the same time. Meeta, therefore, became almost stationary by his side.

Rupert's attendance there could not be regular, in consequence of the many serious arrangements which demanded him at Mr. Vanderhoven's : but he went and came continually ; disclosing in the unguarded negligence of thoughts occu-

pied about others, yet more of that endearing character which had won Meeta's affections.

She meanwhile grew into his heart : the oftener he felt the influence of her youthful beauty, the more intensely did he admire her generous oblivion of that beauty. When he saw her, as if unconscious of fatigue or lassitude, passing from one suite of active attentions to another : now performing some duteous office for her father ; then for his mother ; now pursuing useful needle-work, or household superintendence ; then beguiling Julian into sleep with some melodious lullaby ; looking at, and speaking to each of the dear objects to whom she ministered, with a voice and eyes that seemed Love's fountains : and then when he encountered the vanishing glance of those eyes turned momentarily upon himself ; when he felt their unconscious meaning thrill every fibre of his frame ; — he, too, forgot that

Fortune and a vain-glorious father had cut him off from man's tenderest ties, and rendered the indulgence of present transport a crime against future peace.

CHAP. VII.

IN the silent shade of Julian's sick room, this mutual attachment thus grew and strengthened; unseen by others; unmarked by Madame Roselheim; felt every hour more intensely by themselves.

The same tender cares, the same vicissitudes of hopes and fears for the same object, the same habit of involuntary communion by looks rather than by words, insensibly drew them closer together; and established that sort of tender confidence in each other's sentiments, which sometimes exists between persons thus situated, without formal and explicit declarations.

This confidence, without any such in-

tention on their part, assisted in deceiving those about them : for instinctively aware of being always the centre of each other's thoughts, they could pass whole hours in the same place, without approaching, sometimes without even looking at each other.

As Meeta became rapturously sensible to the affection of Rupert, she questioned herself upon the guilt or innocence of such rapture ; and convinced, that so to be loved by Rupert through life, without seeking more, or wishing more, would constitute felicity enough for her, she falsely imagined that such love must be blameless.

She forgot, that so to continue loving her, he must renounce all higher prospects ; and that for both of them to waste their youth in vain devotedness, would be to blight every rational and laudable hope of their parents.

At nineteen, and in such peculiar cir-

circumstances, a similar fault may find mercy.

Muhldenau never came into the sick room, therefore had no opportunity for particular observation of his daughter; and Madame Roselheim, lulled into security about Meeta's state by her now tranquillized manner, was too interested and engaged in attendance upon Julian, and in conjecturing the probable conduct of his father, to carry into her conversations with her son, any ideas foreign to these objects of vital importance.

If Rupert appeared more pensive and absent than formerly, — if he sighed oftener, and seemed less inclined to change of place and pursuits, — it seemed natural to her, after so much distress, and in the midst of so many extraordinary anxieties. Sympathy with her, supplied a reason for many a melancholy reverie, during which it must be confessed her son was schooling himself for yielding to an attachment for which there could

be no end but bitterness. In calmer times Madame Roselheim would have read her son better.

Meanwhile, Julian's safety became hourly more decided : the disfiguring appearances of his disorder began to die away ; he became sensible to pleasure and old associations ; and the joy of those near him would have been complete, had not his longing to see his governor, and his pathetic complaints for fear he had displeased him before he was sick, rendered it a task of grievous difficulty to keep the sad truth unrevealed.

It was therefore thought advisable to reveal the Franciscan's illness to the child, and tell him it had returned ; thus paving the way for a disclosure of the calamitous fact, at a later period.

Julian's affectionate lamentation at this information touched every heart, while he eagerly enquired how long it would be ere he should be well enough to go and visit him.

Dr. Ostermann's answer was evasive ; for though the danger and virulence of Julian's malady had ceased, its enfeebling effects still hung heavy upon so delicate a constitution ; and frequent lapses of consciousness, nearly amounting to fainting fits, rendered it necessary for some one to watch by him day and night, as had been done heretofore.

On the day appointed for Father Joachim's funeral, Meeta took her station with Madame Roselheim in Julian's chamber, where the latter was to sit up for the first time. The catholic burying-ground, in which the remains of the Franciscan were to be deposited, lay at a considerable distance from Mariendorpt ; so that Rupert, who had gone to pay the last tribute to them, could not be expected till very late in the day. It was Meeta's business to amuse away the child's observation of his long absence.

She arranged wooden regiments of horse, built castles and churches of shells,

invented appropriate adventures for those edifices to figure in, and displayed all the wonders of the microscope, to entertain the little convalescent ; but nothing could entirely banish his friend and his governor from his thoughts. Again and again he asked, " Where Rupert was gone? If his governor were worse?" then remarked how much better he was himself; adding, with sweet artlessness, " I shall be well to-morrow, shan't I, dear Meeta? — and you will take me to Mr. Vanderhoven's to my governor; and you will go with us, dear madame?" he added, looking smilingly up in her brimming eyes; " and we'll all go — my dear, dear brother, and all." A deep and obvious confusion crimsoned his pale face, as the last words escaped him: he hastened to hide it on Meeta's bosom.

" O, I have done wrong!" he whispered, in plaintive accents.

" What have you done, dear child, that any one here —"

“ I have called Rupert brother,” whispered Julian, in a yet lower voice ; “ and he forbid me ever to do so before Madame. He never calls me so but when we are by ourselves ; and then he calls me his dear little brother, and does kiss me so ! ”

Madame Roselheim’s quick ear caught the whole of this artless address, and her first movement was to quit the room ; but returning ere she reached the door, (the tears she was flying to hide, falling from her eyes,) she took Julian in her arms, and with an expression of unutterable tenderness in her looks bade him apprehend no displeasure from her, but continue through life to love Rupert with a brother’s affection.

“ In after years, sweet child,” she added, “ you will be able to understand all you owe to that brother, and will pay him gratitude and admiration, as well as love.”

At that moment the church-bell tolling

for the burial of some obscure parishioner, seemed tolling also for the poor Franciscan ; and at every return of its deep and solemn sound, Meeta shuddered audibly. Madame Roselheim, ever awake to the sensibility of others, and remarking Meeta's suppressed feelings, recommended her to go and breathe the air a while, ere the return of her father from the serious service at which that funeral bell proved he was officiating. The latter obeyed.

A long walk up and down the vine-walk, and a longer conversation with her father, whose mind was calmed and elevated by the immortal views upon which it had just been fixed, restored Meeta to composure ; and having attended upon his early supper, and received his blessing, she took her work, and went to occupy her station in Julian's room.

The present was her night of watching there, and she hastened therefore to relieve Madame Roselheim, who had been

much indisposed through the day, and unequal to her usual exertion.

Meeta stopt when she gained the entrance of the room; for instead of finding Madame Roselheim as she expected, bending silently, and with chastened solicitude over the sleeping boy, she saw by the light of their solitary lamp, that Julian did sleep, but that his affectionate attendant was thrown back in her chair, her face covered with her handkerchief, evidently weeping bitterly.

So sacredly guarded were all Madame Roselheim's individual feelings, that even her son would have felt an awe of breaking in upon a lonely moment of weakness like this. Meeta would have retired: but her hasty step roused her friend's attention; and the latter immediately recovering herself, called the other back.

Without attempting to conceal that she had been weeping, lest the attempt

should argue displeasure at the interruption and intruder, this admirable woman welcomed her young assistant with one of her sweetest smiles, saying she was glad of her appearance, for she herself was quite ready for a night's rest, and meant to retire without waiting for Rupert.

“My spirits are much fatigued,” she added: “to-morrow they will be fresh again, and able to encounter the probable depression of my dear son's. — I think the mixed comfort and sadness of the last few days have been too much for me: — even a book has upset me;” and putting down an opened volume which Meeta now observed in her hand, she embraced her, looked for an instant upon the sleeping Julian, and stole out of the apartment,

It was with no sacrilegious hand that Meeta lifted the book, which her maternal friend confessed had called forth her tears. She saw it was one that she her-

self had been reading, and which, of course, Madame Roselheim had taken up for want of better employment while watching Julian's slumbers.

By a strange coincidence, the fabulous story contained in this work had some resemblance to that of this injured wife; and the page which was blistered with her freshest tears contained a little poem that must have struck all the chords of her heart. It was addressed to the innocent offspring of a guilty attachment, by a virtuous mistress, forsaken for that attachment.

Meeta had read the lines once before with a moderate degree of sympathy; she now felt them enter her soul. Such force do our own feelings give to the humblest as well as noblest efforts at describing similar ones! — yet she wept over them, because they seemed to utter the feelings of Madame Roselheim, who was a wife, and believed her affections inalienable from him to whom she had

sworn them at the altar: Meeta could not quite sympathise with the free maiden that continued so to love a deceiver, or a libertine; she therefore thought not of the original story, while she pondered over the following

STANZAS TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

Sleep, sweetest boy! if thou canst rest
On such a wildly-throbbing breast;
O sleep, and may no dream molest
Thy soft repose!

May angels from Heaven's inmost shrine
Surround thee with a love like mine,
Nor ever, through long life, resign
Their precious charge!

Ah wherefore start these sudden tears?
Why crowd the shades of former years?
What in that smiling face appears
These pangs to wake?

Alas! thy very being proves
That he this heart still fondly loves,
Another, to warm passion moves,
And long hath moved.

Let me then quell this weak regret,
My griefs, my wrongs, my joys forget,
And be as though I ne'er had met
Thy father's eyes.

Sleep, sweetest Boy ! securely sleep ;
(These eyes will only watch and weep,)
Thou needs't not fear the rancour deep
Of jealous rage ;

For thou hast twin'd thee round my heart,
With such resistless, touching art,
That, though at times some tears will start,
Some sighs escape ;

I would not wish thou wert unborn ;
Far less, in this thy dawning morn,
From life and her who bore thee, torn. —
Ah, no ! live on. —

As Meeta read this effusion of rooted affection, she saw in idea, the fostering arms of Madame Roselheim, encircling the unconscious sleeper before her : she marked her softly-stealing tears, and heard her yet softer voice breathing in low murmurs those words of tender indulgence and of fond regret. Her own tears streamed at the vision ; and it was not till after many efforts, she could banish that train of vain and grievous thoughts, which this subject was calculated to produce ; connected

as it was with the honour, and welfare, and bosom-peace of those dearest to her.

Amongst these thoughts, the one dominant, was a serious awe of yielding to a sentiment, which however virtuously felt and carefully placed, was perhaps as much to be dreaded as the spell of an enchanter: it was evident, that the sad magic of such a spell, still hung powerfully on the spirit of the self-disciplined Madame Roselheim; and if to her it had brought only misery, how was a creature, so far inferior as she who mused thus, to expect happiness from it?

Meeta's heart then sought its own vindication in Rupert's excellence, thoroughly-known excellence; but her better reason added, that Love had other modes of rendering wretched besides that of change in its object; and that if she wished to avoid the pangs of self-reproach and utter despair here-

after, she must wrestle with the enemy now.

Meeta had just awakened from this trance of reveries, when a soft slow step upon the stairs, a well-known step, made her heart beat. It was Rupert, unconscious of his mother's absence, ascending to revive his depressed spirits by the sight of her and of Julian.

Meeta's kindling colour and palpitating breast, as she rose in confusion on his entrance, warned him that he must not stay. She faltered out that his mother was already gone to rest, and their dear charge asleep, while her eyes inquired how he had borne the sad ceremony of the day. She meant not to have looked at him ; but when we love, the eyes wait not upon the will.

Rupert's self-possession forsook him, as he met her trembling eye-beams ; and instead of retiring, he advanced a step while he said, " This has been a trying day, indeed, Meeta ; but it is over, thank

God!" The deep sensibility of his tone increased Meeta's agitation, and she stood silent.

Rupert was then going to quit the room, when Julian awoke, and seeing his brother, uttered a joyful exclamation: his awaking seemed to take away the embarrassment or impropriety of remaining alone with Meeta, and Rupert advanced nearer.

Julian had a little history to tell of all that Meeta had done to divert him, and of his own strength in sitting up three whole hours; in short, many prattling nothings, that are interesting when we love the infant speaker. Still, as Rupert would have retired, he prayed him to stay yet a little longer — only till he himself should fall asleep again.

With a languid smile, and something very like a blush, Rupert threw himself on a seat next to Julian's bed, while Meeta involuntarily drew further back, and pursued her work with closer atten-

tion. Yet she spoke, and that much, and with the hurried manner of one who talks from mere confusion.

“ Surely that fine embroidery must make your eyes ache by this feeble light,” observed Rupert: “ had you not better take a book, if you must sit up to-night?”

“ O no, I cannot; this work must be —.” Meeta had begun precipitately to answer, and she stopt as suddenly.

Rupert was silent; he remembered former conversations with his mother: in an instant he comprehended that it was by private toils like these, she and Meeta made up for the added expenditure of Muhlidenau’s household, in consequence of Julian’s illness. That conviction, the pride it pierced, the tenderness it roused, the light it flashed over both their situations, did more than all his former reasonings to show the utter madness of yielding to the fond passion which the events of the last fort-

night had so powerfully increased in his heart. Their mutual poverty stood visibly before him, a phantom more ghastly than death itself.

He drew so heavy a sigh, that Meeta started and looked up: the fixtured of his eyes, the profound sadness of their expression, there was no mistaking; and even at the moment she half-admitted the belief that he was about to own his affection, she felt that there was no indulgence of such an affection in his contemplation. The blood retreated from her cheeks and lips at this conviction; then rushed back to them again in fuller tides, as she hastily resumed her occupation, and hurried out some information to Rupert about the chamber prepared for him.

The purposed hint roused him from his stupor, and he then bent to bid Julian good night. Again the little creature, already half asleep, murmured a prayer that he would stay, and

stretching a hand to each of his dear attendants, promised to be fast asleep again almost directly.

With the coaxing pertinacity of a sick and loving child, he insisted upon retaining their hands till he should fall asleep; and while both, with a tremulous embarrassment which deprived them of presence of mind, remained standing, imprisoned by his feeble grasp, they saw sleep gradually settling once more upon his eye-lids. Meeta waited only for another instant before she released herself; but ere she was aware, Julian's relaxed hand let hers drop suddenly upon that of Rupert. At the touch of that hand, a strange dizziness came over her: Rupert's soul was in tumults: the lovely confusion of her looks increased his heart's beatings; and all at once he caught her hand in his. He would have pressed it to his lips; but, recollecting himself, he exclaimed in a thrilling tone,—

“ O Meeta, would to God I might retain this dear hand for ever!—but I know it cannot be.—My lot is poverty.—Some happier man—.” Rupert uttered these broken words with a passionate vehemence, a convulsive quickness unlike his usual manner.

Meeta heard him in silence : an emotion, at once blissful and agonizing, trembling through her whole frame ; her colour fluctuated, while alternate throbs of pain and transport possessed her heart ; but, as happy emotions died away, and sad ones prevailed, the vermilion of her cheeks disappeared, and the paleness of death settled upon her features.

Blushes speak ; glances speak ; but how equivocally, compared with a total change of complexion ! Slight emotions are capable of calling the blood into our face, but they are profound ones which send it to the heart !

Rupert needed no worded avowal of Meeta's sympathy : that flushing and

fading cheek, and the cold hand which now shook within his, told of a devoted love, which but for woman's modesty, had confessed that beggary with him, were happiness to her.

Tearing himself with powerful mastery from the dangerous contemplation of her looks, he suddenly relinquished her hand. "Meeta, farewell!" he cried; "you shall see me thus no more. I am betraying your father's confidence in me — wronging you and myself. Never, never, again!"

His soul seemed rending from him in the sigh that burst forth with the last words, and, closing his eyes, as if to shut out the dangerous sight of her answering emotion, he rushed from her presence.

Meeta had known some moments of powerful emotion; joy, nay transport she had known; grief to agony: but, till this moment, never had she felt what she could neither have called joy nor sorrow. The explicit declaration of Rupert's

attachment contained every thing her artless heart desired; but there came with it a sense of wrong in calling it forth — a pang of remorse for rejoicing at what must give grief and disappointment to his suffering mother. She remembered former magnanimous resolutions, now broken; vows of self-conquest made in secret by the side of her honoured father; all, all, cancelled by this moment of weakness. She had listened to Rupert's tender apostrophe without reproving, or attempting to interrupt him: she had done worse; she had suffered him to see that her destiny was in his hands; that her perseverance in a course of self-command depended upon his. Even the rapture of knowing herself the chosen of Rupert's heart, was lost in the humiliation of this idea; and she could no otherwise silence the just alarm of her virgin delicacy, than by reiterating former resolutions more earnestly than ever; and promising from this hour to avoid even

his looks, with the sincerity of one bent upon repairing a heinous fault.

Happily, her heart acquitted her of treachery to Adolpha Falkenberg. The new light her father's remarks had thrown upon that engaging young woman's feelings, had strengthened by subsequent reflection; and nearly satisfied of his conjecture being a right one, she had long ceased to consider Adolpha's happiness as in any way dependent upon the affections of Rupert.

With throbbing pulses, Meeta now sat down to review the whole of her past conduct, and see wherein she had failed most, to obey the implied wishes of her beloved Madame Roselheim, and the exhortations of her own principles. That she had not sufficiently guarded her soul's secret, was too evident, since he, from whom, of all others, she had hitherto wished it hidden, addressed her rather with mournful confidence in the mutu-

ality of their affection, than with timid doubt of its return.

It was in vain that the weaker half of her mind pleaded the agitating events of the last fortnight in excuse for some surprises of feeling; she was inflexible to herself; and wore away the night, during which Julian slept blessedly, in alternate determinations to efface her fault, and supplications to Heaven for power of mind to fulfil them.

When Rupert and she met the next morning in the presence of her father, the countenance of the former was sad, serious, yet composed: his manner was the same.

Meeta felt all this, without having once ventured to glance at him: so subtle, so mysterious, are the mutual intelligences of the master passion! And though the colour fluttered in her cheek, like the pinions of a dying bird, she endeavoured to mould her words and actions so as to

assure him that she wished not to bend him from his just purpose, but rather sought to maintain her own claim on his respect by proper firmness on her part.

Rupert understood her ; and perhaps his resolves were shaken by the evident nobleness of hers. He sighed to think that he must think of her no longer ; and, feeling his soul falter, he hastened to strengthen it anew in the society of his mother.

A few moments with her sufficed to restore Rupert's better spirit. He blushed at the merely selfish wishes his fancy had lingered round ; and, while regarding the sacred duty he had to fulfil towards this suffering mother, the wounds his tender cares must close, the consolations to which he must dedicate himself, ere he could atone to her for the wrongs committed by his father, he wondered how he could ever have allowed himself to dream, for an instant, of love's earthly paradise.

The discourse of the mother and son on this morning was principally confined to the sad subject of Father Joachim's death, and the circumstances consequent upon it. To discourse more freely, they withdrew to a lower room, (Meeta having come into Julian's chamber to afford them that freedom,) and there Madame Rosenheim learnt, that, in conformity with her early advice and the dying request of the Franciscan, the priest who had acted as his confessor, and officiated at his funeral, was gone off that very morning with all speed to the Count of Rhinegraves-tien, the bearer of a letter written at intervals during Father Joachim's illness, which, Rupert doubted not, made honourable mention of his friends at Mariendorpt, and contained matter concerning Julian.

In repeating this to his mother, Rupert could not refrain from adding, that, tenderly as he loved Julian, he should rejoice if the bearer of this letter returned

with news of the little prisoner's exchange. Gladly would he now obey the summons to give him up ; since the anguish he had endured during the boy's illness, lest he should die in their hands, and so leave an undeserved stain upon their name, was beyond the conception of any other human being than his mother herself.

“ I, too, would rejoice, my son,” said Madame Roselheim, her eyes floating in tears of concern, “ if, when we surrendered Julian, I could think that we were sending him where he will be as happy as he is with us. But I am wrong to conjecture his mother's character. — Heaven will make the other heart, the tenderer to him, doubtless if hers is — ” Madame Roselheim passed her hand over her eyes as she interrupted herself, and smiling pensively, turned from the image former partiality had conjured up, to the subject of her son's health.

She had now liberty to attend to that, she said, since the more pressing claims of the Franciscan, and his young charge, were over ;—the one, how blessedly ! the other how mournfully over ! She questioned him on his sensations, rather than on his faded looks and spirits ; for a change in both of them, she could not wonder at ; and as she remembered all that his health had owed formerly to the skill and kindness of the departed monk, she gave a fuller sigh to his memory.

Rupert, in reply, assured her that he had not been unmindful of himself during his attendance at Mr. Vanderhoven's ; for that, eager to return to his duty with the army, he had continued to follow, as well as he could, the rules laid down for him by Father Joachim ; and had occasionally taken the advice of Dr. Ostermann, when the instructions of the other were no longer to be attained.

He besought her also to believe, that the man who had gone through more than two weeks of confinement in the noxious air of an infected chamber, harassed with grief and perplexity, and afterwards condemned to witness the sad and solemn sight of a death-bed, without mortal injury to himself, should no longer be considered as one unfit for the encounters of a camp.

He intreated her to rely on his assurance of feeling quite competent to all the duties of his military station, and to allow him, therefore, to think of rejoining his regiment at no distant day.

Madame Roselheim looked earnestly on her son : she sighed once or twice ; and at last, gently doubting his judgment of his own case, remarked that he must be actuated by some additional motive, besides that of mere eagerness to return to his regiment, since it was too probable that after he should reach the camp he

would find himself incompetent to active service.

Rupert owned, he was so actuated ; and, trying to keep down his swelling heart, confessed that he felt ashamed of having so long lived upon the hospitality of the minister of Mariendorpt. It is true, that nearly the whole of the young soldier's pay had been frankly accepted by Muhldenau, to swell the family stock of income ; but Rupert was aware, and he knew his mother must be so too, that even so, he had not indemnified Muhldenau for the many minor indulgences which that amiable man had gratuitously sought for his guest ; and for the extended expenditure of his household, in consequence of Madame Krazau's occasional visits, and Julian's illness.

For the latter, however, Rupert allowed that the Franciscan had left a large sum of money in his hands, to be used for the purposes of the Father's decent

sepulture, and for the payment of any debts incurred on his pupil's account. But there are numberless trifling expences which kindness indulges in for others, that are neither capable of exact calculation, nor strictly chargeable as debts, yet which severely strain the narrow means of the very man who would spurn the offer of their re-payment ; and Rupert felt that, rather than have such repaid by the Count of Rhinegravestein, to any friend whom his mother might be supposed to influence, he himself would sell the very sword by which he was to hew out his own subsistence.

With hesitation at first, and finally with a degree of energy unusual to his gentleness and gaiety, the son of Rhinegravestein confided those sentiments to his mother. She was deeply affected by them. She had hitherto hoped that such considerations might not strike her son's mind ; and yet, painfully alive to them herself, secretly resolved upon the sale

of a favourite and valuable memorial of former days, to indemnify her generous friend for his expences, and reward his domestics for their cares for Julian.

Unable to offer a single objection to Rupert's arguments, and further moved by his serious assurance, that if he hoped to secure any military expectancy, he must endeavour to reach the Swedish head-quarters, ere Marshal Torstenson should leave them; she yielded herself at once to what seemed inevitable; but, regarding him with eyes that dissolved in tears as she gazed, she exclaimed,

"Be it so. — I resign you to glory and — danger again! But, O, my Rupert, so much dearer than ever, how shall I bear to part with you?"

"By thinking that it is for your son's good, my mother," he whispered, folding her in his arms, and printing a light kiss on her cheek. "Must I own that I am not proof against a danger you do not seem to have dreamed of? — Believe

me, I ought not to stay in this house much longer."

The colour mounted, even to his temples, as his mother, starting back in his arms, and comprehending at once what he meant, cast on him a surprised and afflicted look.

He pressed her again to his breast. "Be not too much alarmed for me," he said, forcing a playful smile; "'tis as well to fly the danger a man foresees."

Madame Roselheim tremblingly disengaged herself from her son's arms, and sunk down upon a seat. Sudden faintness was visible in her paleness and respiration; but she waved him off with her hand, when he would have lifted her into the air, remaining some time without the power of speaking.

"Dearest mother! do you doubt your son's conduct?" asked Rupert at last, uncertain what to understand from her long silence.

"Doubt you, my Rupert!" The voice

in which she echoed this question, the smile, the eye-beam which accompanied it, needed no explanation, and her son folded her again to his grateful heart.

An affecting, almost a solemn pause ensued. Rupert then said, "I have shocked you more than I expected; but indeed you need not fear any imprudence, or giving way, on my part. — I can yet trust myself; so you may trust me still, dearest mother!"

"I am sure I may," Madame Rosenheim returned, with an immediate firmness, which elevated the expression of her whole countenance; "there is no other light wanting to guide your conduct towards yourself and others, than your own right mind, — that will teach you to hold the peace of this house sacred: your mother need not show you how to act. I grieve most for ——" Madame Rosenheim checked her tongue, ere it uttered any thing that might betray the sentiment of Meeta; and vainly attempting

to smile, she added, with increased emotion, "I can have no wish but for the happiness of you both : and, if prayers might obtain it, my son, in the way you wish — never till now have I felt all the cruelty — the barbarousness — O my wronged Rupert !" — her voice expired in tears, as the conviction of her husband's unworthiness pressed on her with full force for the first time in her patient life. To pardon that husband, appeared at this moment a crime against her virtuous son ; and, afflicted beyond all her former afflictions, she covered her face with her handkerchief, and wept aloud.

Rupert wrung and kissed her hand alternately ; besought her to dismiss such useless regrets ; prayed her to pardon him for alluding to a weakness which perhaps he ought to have smothered in silence ; uttered some animating presages of his own fame or fortune ; and gradually soothing her by his blended

tenderness and cheerfulness, into something like composure, withdrew from the subject which had caused all this pain, without having once named the unconscious object of their joint interest.

In making what may seem this unnecessary confession to his mother, Rupert was actuated by the same principles and habits which had prompted him to avow the forbidden feeling to Meeta herself.

It was ever his wish to be thoroughly understood by those he loved and lived with ; and perhaps without formally reasoning upon the subject, he had felt, with regard to Meeta, that it were better to confess his affection for her, and his conviction of its imprudence at the same time, than by the change of manners he must subsequently adopt, leave her to despise him for caprice ; or what would be yet worse, allow her romantic

and dangerous ingenuity to imagine reasons for the change; foreign from the truth.

Rupert's heart was not one of those wilful ones which refuse to accept any compensation for their fullest desires. If he might not secure Meeta's love, he felt that to retain her esteem would be a blessing of no mean value.

Candour only could do that: and, relying equally upon the justice and tenderness of her nature, he assured himself that she would pardon him the frailty of suffering the affection she created, to change its fraternal character for one of a more agitating nature. He felt that she would acknowledge the chain of necessity in which a hard fortune bound him; and admit that every principle of filial tenderness, gratitude, and humanity, called on him to sacrifice selfish desires, when they militated against the sacred claims of his mother.

If, as he had for some time thrillingly felt, without dwelling on it, Meeta's heart had proceeded in the same erring path with his own, the avowal of his love, so accompanied, would but save her from the hazard of increasing her own weakness by those alternate fits of doubt and conviction, of perplexity and confidence, which alarmingly fan the fire of love ; she would at once know what was the sentiment he felt for her ; and learn that he believed self-command incumbent on them both : — she would, consequently, take as decided a part as he did, having the same feeling to animate her — the honourable pride of making a great and laudable sacrifice.

In his conversation with his mother, Rupert had treated the subject lightly ; that is, he had but touched it. Some hint of his inmost feelings was necessary, that she might not increase the difficulties of the task he meditated, by ignorantly thwarting his efforts. But it was useless

to tell her how deeply those vain wishes were rooted in his breast, which he meant to tear thence, though at the cost of half his youthful happiness.

Madam Roselheim's penetration, when once awakened to any object, was as acute as her delicacy was perfect. She withdrew investigation and lamentation from the subject of her son's unfortunate prepossession, as immediately as he seemed to desire; while, at the same time, many a bitter remembrance, many an anxious endeavour to reconcile impossibilities, contended in secret with the sober convictions of reason and experience. So truly did this admirable woman love her son, and the endearing young creature who had hitherto been to her as a daughter, that could she at that moment have purchased mutual happiness for them by resigning her own life, cheerfully would she have done so. But such purchase was impossible: and in forbearing to combat Rupert's

heroic resolution, she was restrained solely by considerations for the future good of himself and Meeta; by gratitude towards the unsuspecting Muhldenau; and by pity for innocent children yet unborn.

CHAP. VIII.

IN consequence of the explanation with his mother, Rupert had free leave to expedite any business with which he was concerned at Mariendorpt. Some little time was necessary for the arrangement of his own immediate wants, when removed from under a tender mother's eye ; and ere he departed, he believed it his duty to superintend the purification and re-establishment of Mr. Vanderhoven's house, so that its worthy master might return to it unfearing.

The obligations he felt to that gentleman hung heavily on his heart ; for they were such as he might never hope to repay. They consisted, not merely of unbounded hospitality to strangers for

his sake, but of personal agitations incurred through those strangers, for which no future services of his could be any compensation ; — of inconveniences and disagreeables sustained through them, which might well try the Christian temper of one hitherto accustomed only to ease and security. Nothing that Rupert could do from himself, was ever likely to bear any proportion to his gratitude on this occasion ; but he doubted not, that his father's gratitude, added to his magnificent habits, would display itself in some splendid present, calculated to form a lasting memorial of their mutual obligation, and so prove a source of pardonable pride in the friends and relations of that truly good man.

With this view, Rupert had exhorted the priest, who was gone to the Count of Rhinegravestein, to detail at length the disinterested goodness of Mr. Vanderhoven ; to dwell upon the painful discomforts which his humanity had entailed

upon him; yet distinctly to state that neither that gentleman, nor any other of Julian's friends in Holland, must be shocked by the offer of any pecuniary compensation whatever.

The individual expenses, both of the governor's and pupil's illnesses, such as physician's fees, &c. together with those incurred by the former's death, would be defrayed unhesitatingly out of the fund left by the Franciscan; and all the overplus, returned to the Amsterdam Bank, in the name of its original owner.

Rupert could not hope to be still at Mariendorpt when this messenger should return from his father's camp; but he daily expected Aremberg, and to his friendship he meant to consign the execution of the concerns he must leave unwound up. In his especial care, it was his intention to leave Julian, until the vexatious disputes about the exchange of the little creature were settled: an event

seemingly as remote as the peace itself, which had now been negotiating for three years at Munster, even while the armies of the different powers represented there, were continuing to deluge Germany with their blood.

During Father Joachim's mortal illness, Rupert had often thought of his absent friend, without once wishing for him. A death-scene, where the holy office of the latter was not called into action, was doubtless the very last, in which those who remembered Aremberg's early history, desired to see him.

Amongst the miseries, therefore, of the two sick chambers, one theme of gladness and gratefulness presented itself in his absence, — the providential departure of the two Danish ladies, ere Mr. Vanderhoven's house became a place of trouble and danger.

In those days the uncertain modes of communication, not only between the inhabitants of different countries, but

between those who lived under the same government, obliged every one to exercise much patience on the subject of travelling friends. Thus, the dwellers at the Parsonage having once bidden Aremberg good-bye, did not hope to hear either from him, or of his interesting companions, until they should behold him again.

At Utrecht, Mr. Vanderhoven doubtless thought of little else, wished for little else, than his nephew's return: but, at Mariendorpt, anxiety had but two important objects for awhile; and it was not until the one was raised from the bed of death, and the other laid in his grave, that even Rupert ventured to wish for, or permitted himself to think constantly of Aremberg.

Expecting him now every hour, he was exceedingly disappointed, when instead of his friend, he received a letter from him, purporting that the latter having had the satisfaction of conducting

the ladies under his charge safely to Alsace, was at the moment of writing, on the point of crossing the Rhine, and making a short excursion into Suabia; tempted, he said, by the vicinity of the Swedish camp, to revisit his friends in Marshal Torstenson's division, now campaigning there, and learn the military news of them for his friend.

Rupert was not blinded by Aremberg's slight mention of this excursion; he guessed that it was made solely in the hope of serving him. And indeed if Aremberg were to find Marshal Torstenson still with the troops, his representations in his friend's behalf might be more effectual than any the latter could urge for himself; for neither delicacy nor self-distrust would fetter his tongue.

It was not a sense of obligation that pressed upon Rupert at this moment; it was the genial glow of affection felt, and affection demonstrated.

He communicated the letter, and the

feelings consequent upon it, to those around him, and the pleasure these diffused, was the first entirely pleasurable ray that had gilded their darkened house since the death of Father Joachim.

There was nothing in the letter, however, that in any way tended to confirm or destroy the conjectures of Muhldenuau with respect to the state of the writer's heart. Meeta was mortified when she read in it only a few very temperate, perhaps she hoped, guarded expressions of satisfaction at having conveyed his charges safely, and seen them placed in a beautiful residence in Lauterbourg. But she forbore to make the observation to her father; never, indeed, introducing subjects of delicate interest to that honoured parent, unless he invited their discussion; and perhaps, fearful of discovering her own secret, by displaying too perfect an acquaintance with the sentiment under survey.

Her own secret, however, ever since

the agitating explanation from Rupert, Meeta had guarded with trembling vigilance, even from him. She now curbed the eager zeal with which she used formerly to start up to perform some of those little services for Rupert, which the habits of domestic familiarity enable one member of a family to perform for the others. She forbade her lips to make admiring comments on his conduct: nay, she forbore to ask his sympathy even with her eyes, when some beautiful passage in a book, or some interesting trait of character, excited her enthusiasm, or started her tears.

Above all things, she conquered herself on the subject of Rupert's departure. Alas! she could not command her looks, when that event was first talked of before her; but she quelled her words, her sighs, her tears: she consented to appear dead or senseless, and rather to hear the piercing news in what might seem unfeeling silence, than, by a falter-

ing accent, disclose what was passing in her soul.

Rupert's outward composure rivalled hers, — possibly exceeded it. Man's happier hardihood of nerves and complexion render those emotions imperceptible in him, which the transparent and feebler structure of woman, shows with the distinctness of material objects through crystal. Rupert therefore seemed unmoved, when his whole heart was penetrated with fond regret : often, when his hasty glance surprised a tear in Meeta's averted eye, he would fancy it sprung from his supposed indifference, and the tender gratitude, that fancy inspired, as often cost him, either after repentance for having yielded to it by a speaking sigh or whispered notice, or led him to censure himself still more severely, for too ruthless a perseverance in self-denial.

Madame Roselheim, meanwhile, was a silent, a sorrowing, and gratified observer of all this. If any thing could console

her under the pain of witnessing the struggles of two young and virtuous hearts formed by Nature for each other, yet forbidden to join by Fortune, it was the contemplation of that quiet heroism which they separately displayed.

Even suffering virtue is a spectacle delightful to behold ; — the moral sublime, and beautiful, are combined in it : so that while the mother of Rupert wept in secret over the destiny of her son, she gloried in his excellence, and ventured to believe that by some other hand than Meeta's, Heaven would bestow happiness on him at last.

For poor Meeta herself she felt deeper compassion, and stronger apprehensions. That young creature would soon be left to think of Rupert, as one surrounded by agitating dangers, and would have no stirring duties, like him, to rouse her heart, and employ all the faculties of her mind. The sedentary occupations of her sex, also, and the retired habits of her

life, would afford too easy an entrance for those musings, which are the food of unfortunate attachments. And the claims upon her self-restraint, being besides, rather of a negative, than of an active character, she would draw no succours from without. That very sympathy with herself, from which Madame Roselheim had hitherto derived one of her sweetest enjoyments, and surest comforts, would tend to keep Meeta's thoughts and feelings totally fixed upon the one forbidden object.

How she was to escape, therefore, from toils so closely woven around her, even the subdued character of the friend that revolved these things, knew not to imagine.

There was hope only in time, or absence; and to insure the trial of the latter, Madame Roselheim made *her* sacrifice, and mentally vowed that until the change she prayed for, had taken place in Meeta's affections, she would

never permit her son to revisit Mariendorpt.

Great was the sacrifice : but it was due to the unsuspecting parent of the poor victim in question : and Madame Roselheim felt, as if by making it, she atoned in some degree for the wrong unintentionally committed by her son, against his peace.

Confiding in the integrity of Rupert, and the filial sense of Meeta, Madam Roselheim gladly obeyed the delicacy and tenderness of her own nature, and forbore to enforce the necessity for their mutual perseverance, except by that mode of gentle insinuation peculiar to her indulgent manner.

A remark dropt concerning others in similar situations ;—a word that might re-awaken watchfulness of themselves when theirs was accidentally lulled to sleep ;—a glance at her son ; or a commission instantaneously invented, to remove Meeta from a dangerous situation :—by

such acts alone, did this judicious mother and friend, think proper to touch the shrinking wounds of two ingenuous hearts.

But, though she spoke not on the subject to Meeta, the latter had a perpetual consciousness of moving without a veil, before those equally honoured and merciful eyes; and the consciousness, though painful to modesty, acted as a support and a stimulant to heroism.

The *detour*, projected by Aremberg towards the Neckar, was not of any great length; so that the inhabitants of Mariendorpt concluded he would be soon amongst them. And as Mr. Vanderhoven had not yet found himself in sufficient spirits to re-enter his house again after the melancholy event which had taken place in it, Rupert was induced to linger a while longer, to await the reappearance of the one, and to pay a brief visit to the other.

Meanwhile he neglected nothing that

might repair his shattered strength ; and, when he was not devoting himself to the amusement of his convalescent brother, he rode into the country, or rowed upon the canal, or assisted in some homely labour of the field or garden for Esther's service.

By this course he strengthened, while he occupied himself; and in spite of many a mental pain, his mother had the joy of seeing his cheek gradually re-colour, and his graceful figure resume its fulness of fine proportion.

Julian, too, hourly improved in health, his tender skin resumed its whiteness : but its level smoothness was no more. The marks of the cruel disorder which had spared his life, were still there, and for the whole of that life.

As Madame Rosenheim folded the little creature to her breast, she did so as often in paroxysms of regret, as of fondness.

Extreme beauty, indeed, was defaced ;

but there was something dearer now in those features than beauty itself. They told the tale of many a sorrowing hour, many a transporting hope; of sufferings alleviated; agonies wept: they recalled asking looks, piteous tones, never to be remembered without feelings of the intensest gratitude for the pangs of the moment in which they were heard and seen, having passed away.

Thus endeared by a variety of associated recollections, and by the very depth of their compassion, Julian seemed daily to acquire fresh influence over the happiness of Mariendorpt. His young heart had received and hardly recovered the shock of hearing his governor's death: and though, perhaps, so infant a mind could not quite take in the solemn meaning of the word "death," a vague impression of grief, and awe, and loss, was made on it, which added

a bewildered feeling to the natural weight of sorrow.

Yet, frequently, Julian forgot the sad event, and spoke of his governor as alive; especially if he saw any objects they were used to remark together: and then, perhaps, stopping short in his animated exclamations, the ready tears would gush over his cheeks, and bear witness to the affectionate sensibility of his nature. However indistinct might be the images of death and desolation which now haunted the little creature's heart, it was evident that although they might indeed but appear and vanish like spectres, they left sadness and thoughtfulness behind them.

Rupert saw that this first great sorrow would colour the whole of his brother's life, by giving a pensive shade to his character; and he could not repress a sigh, therefore, when he made the remark to Muhldenau.

“ He will be only the better man for it,” was the good minister’s just and consoling answer.

Those few words gave him to whom they were addressed, a theme to ponder on ; and sending his mind’s eye forward through the long vista of time, he conjectured Julian’s future destiny.

Taking along with him the conviction of that amiable child’s sensible and grateful disposition, his active imagination, his tremulous tenderness, and his obedience to authority, Rupert fancied many a difficult situation for him, arising from the deep impressions of the present period, and the jarring duties of one yet to come.

Rupert had however so firm a persuasion of Julian’s natural and acquired inclination to all that is right and kindly, that he felt convinced he never would do aught, of himself, likely to cause a pang to those from whom he would hereafter be separated wholly. The

paradise of that pure bosom might be broken in upon by sorrow, but never trodden down by sin.

So, at least, our hero thought : and feeling his love for this dear brother increase with the circumstances which were likely to tincture the latter's character and fate, he ventured not to imagine the perplexities and pains of his own and his mother's situation, when affection would yearn towards the house they must never enter more, even to seek Julian.

How different was that second-sight of his own and his brother's fate, which he had beheld on the banks of the Regen five years ago !—an obscure monastic life for himself ;—one of unbroken high fortune for the new-born heir !

The storms he then anticipated for Julian, were those of the passions only ;—such passions as power may be expected to engender, and slaves to foster. The trials and triumphs he looked to for

himself, were merely spiritual warfare and victory over those imperious passions in his brother's breast. He dreamt not of a time like the present, when his own armed hand would place the person, nay, life of the innocent usurper of his rights, at his mercy, and bestow on him the godlike power of succouring, where he was expected to strike.

As Rupert dwelt on these contrasted views of imagination and reality, his awed and grateful spirit bowed before that gracious Providence whose decrees seemed to ordain that Julian's earliest deep impressions should be such as were likely to counteract the baneful influence of future prosperity. And it was with something like filial pride, that the son of the injured Madam Roselheim thought how many of that interesting child's best impulses in maturer age, might be traceable to the sentiments excited by her conduct to him now, and his grateful memory of it hereafter.

Such was the only revenge Rupert wished his mother to take over the proud woman that had supplanted her; such the only course he wished pursued to bring his father to repentance. His heart might be grieved, shocked, alienated by his kind; but neither outrage nor wrong, could teach that heart to hate.

Three weeks had passed since the interment of Father Joachim, and Aremberg still remaining absent, Rupert fixed the time for his own departure; and went to Utrecht for a couple of days, to see Mr. Vanderhoven: that gentleman not feeling inclined to return into his melancholy mansion, until his nephew should be there to welcome him, and dispel its gloom.

Rupert reached his home — perhaps, it should be said, the Parsonage — at so late an hour of the night, (having ridden from Utrecht, and been detained on the road,) that he expected to find the family gone to bed: but the moon glisten-

ing on all the windows of the lonely dwelling, shewed him that the shutters were not yet up.

He checked his horse as he came in sight of it, to contemplate the picture formed by the irregular vine-covered house itself, with its accompaniments of shrubs, grass-fields, and water : all these features increased in picturesque effect, by the broad masses of moon-shine and of deep shadow, which covered them.

Rupert was such a passionate lover of peaceful landscape, that at any time, a house standing alone, so that it had gable ends and large trees near it, and was seen by moonlight, caused him an emotion of pleasure : how much more charming was the present picture in his eyes, associated as it was with the dear and delightful enjoyments of home ! — He curbed the sudden thought, that he would soon be far from that home, and all whom it contained ; and rather ex-

pecting that he should find Aremberg there, just returned, rode into the stable-yard, where he put up his horse himself, and proceeded through a side-door, into the inferior quarter of the house.

The first person he saw was Esther : her troubled look and disturbed complexion, caused him a momentary alarm. "Is any thing the matter?" he asked, yet without waiting reply.

"Stop, Sir — stop ! till I tell you," exclaimed she, seizing his arm with one of those strong grasps, which there is no resisting without violence.

Rupert paused ; but, instead of distinctly saying what had occurred, the half-incensed, half-afflicted creature began such an anathema against the *infamous pair*, who, she said, would end by murdering her Lady, and by whom Rupert well knew she meant his Father and the Countess, that his impatient fears could be endured no longer, and,

breaking from her hold, he hurried, all consternation and apprehension, at once into the common sitting-room.

He found there, only Muhldenau himself, walking to and fro, with a fixed flush upon his cheek; a sign of inward disturbance unusual to his countenance. He saluted Rupert by an exclamation of satisfaction at his arrival, which somewhat re-assured the latter; and he asked therefore with less trepidation than he had done of Esther, whether his mother had heard any distressing news?

Muhldenau then saw, that he was prepared for something unpleasant; and quieting his strongest apprehensions, that had her for their object, told him as briefly as possible, the cause of their present agitation.

“ Julian,” he said, “ had been forcibly carried off, not four hours before, by three men, muffled and disguised. These persons had appeared suddenly from the water at the bottom of the

garden where Madame Roselheim was walking with the child, after the heat of the day had ceased ; and were so quick in their movements, that her first sight of them was at the instant they snatched Julian from her leading hand ; and though she called loudly for assistance, and wildly attempted to rescue him, they escaped with their prey, into the boat whence they had come ; rowing away with an expedition which might have baffled pursuit, had one been made immediately.

But against this chance of detection, one of the ruffians had provided effectually, by striking Madame Roselheim so severe a blow upon the head, that she fell, completely stunned, to the earth. She was not discovered till supper-time ; when Esther, going to remind her lady of the hour, found her in the situation described. She was, of course, directly borne into the house, and there, busied in restoring her to life, wild with grief and perplexity, it was some minutes before either

Esther . or Meeta thought of Julian. When on sending into the garden for him, it was seen that he was no-where to be found, new terrors seized them ; and the belief that he must have fallen into the water, and so occasioned the swoon in which Madame Roselheim lay, gave the perpetrators of this daring outrage, longer time for escape.

On this dreadful imagination, Meeta sent for her father who was at a neighbouring farm-house baptizing an infant : ere he had returned with the messenger, Madame Roselheim came to herself.

Her senses at first appeared to wander ; perhaps they did so in reality : and when she more collectedly accounted for her stupor, by mentioning the blow she had received, though that was necessarily coupled with the information of Julian's seizure, Esther had no thought beyond procuring assistance for her dear lady ; and Meeta's faculties were so confounded

by the atrocity of the act, and its probable consequences to those she loved best, that she did not recover any thing like rational consciousness, until her father appeared.

Muhlidenau's first step was to have Madame Roselheim's head examined by a proper person : happily, it was found that the blow in aid of acute mental agony, had stunned, without inflicting a greater wound than a very severe bruise. After satisfying himself of this, he hastened to the legal authorities of the village, to lay information against such unknown persons as had carried off Julian : doing this, less in the hope of recovering him by such means, than with the intention of warding off from Rupert, any suspicion that he had been induced to connive at the escape of the prisoner.

Rupert, therefore, had the satisfaction of knowing that every right step had been promptly taken ere he arrived ; and that was some alleviation of the grief and

dismay with which he listened to this painful relation.

While Muhldenau narrated it, our hero testified his lively interest in what was said, rather by looks than words. He stood before him, with brows sternly bent; lips strongly compressed; a complexion varying with every deep and inward breath he drew; expressing unconsciously by the convulsive action of his now clasped and now opened hand, a degree of burning indignation which no circumstance of his own life had ever caused him to display.

Muhldenau had from the first assured him that his mother was rather agitated than injured; so that Rupert was able to enquire every particular of the infamous transaction ere he sought herself.

Those enquiries satisfied, and pressing the good minister's hand in sign of lively acknowledgment, he went directly to his mother's chamber.

He found her up, with no other

change made in her dress than the substitution of a closer cap than that which she ordinarily wore through the day. Madame Roselheim's cares were ever for her son; and she would have feared to shock him, had she suffered him to find her in bed.

Except, therefore, from a look of unconquerable languor, and a more touching sweetness in her smile, as she saw him enter, he might have fancied her spirits in their usual state.

Such forbearing goodness pierced to his inmost soul; and while he took the dear hand she held out to him, the glance he exchanged with Meeta, who stood behind her chair, made the latter thrill. There was a determined sentiment in this glance, which, seen in another man's eyes, would have made her sensible, that he who looked thus, was resolved on some signal vengeance. Such an expression so exceedingly changed his countenance, that even his mother

was struck by it ; and her first words were a prayer that he would not pre-judge any one : assuring him that now she had recovered the shock of the moment, she felt the blow was not worth remembering ; and that she only wanted to know if Julian were indeed in safe hands, to be reconciled to what had occurred. “ O my mother ! ” was Rupert’s impetuous answer ; “ can you doubt what hands have thus basely — good God ! that I should live to speak thus of — ”

“ Rupert ! my son ! ” — Madame Roselheim exclaimed, interrupting the name that he was on the point of uttering. Her accent was piteous and deprecating, and her eyes cast a troubled glance towards Meeta.

Meeta understood their mute expression. Sacred to her, was that fidelity to a duty, which permitted none to raise the veil from her husband’s faults ; and hastily retreating from the place she occupied, she vanished from the apart-

ment. Left alone with her son, Madame Roselheim at once repeated all that Muhldenau had previously detailed ; but softening every part likely to irritate her son, concluded by exhorting him to waste no time upon unnecessary anxiety concerning her, but hasten back to his regiment, that he might be the first to give information of what had happened, and to invite inquiry into his conduct.

Rupert's soul was so completely disturbed, and his mind bewildered, that for some time, his only answers to her judicious and tender counsel, were alternate bursts of grief and indignation, while revolving his father's probable share in the transaction. All at once, a new light flashed upon him ; and recollecting several detached and ambiguous sentences uttered by the Franciscan, during the unsettled state of his faculties while ill ; remembering his unaccountable uneasiness about Julian, at a time when his confidence in those about

him appeared the strongest ; he felt convinced that the integrity of that excellent man had been tampered with, by some emissary of the Count or Countess Rhinegravestein ; and that the seizure of Julian was only the termination of a long-contrived plot.

Such a violation of all the laws of honour and war, after the solemn pledge given in his illustrious master's name by Father Joachim ; such a base return for perfect generosity ; such a wanton destruction of a son's fortune and good name, by an act which might implicate the one, and probably ruin the other, — perhaps, never was known in the annals of disgraceful atrocity. Rupert felt that it had struck the last blow to his filial love for a parent, whom hitherto he could contemplate in his public relations, with unalloyed admiration. As a soldier, honour unsullied, bravery and military genius rarely equalled, rendered Rhinegravestein's name, one which even a

wronged son might be proud to hear : and, though his private conduct must ever sink that son's heart with grief, as the majority of the professors of the Catholic faith looked on this foul part of their hero's life, rather as a beam than a blot, Rupert might still allow himself the merciful and pious hope, that it was principally the act of a misguided opinion of duty.

Agitated as he was at this moment, it was impossible for him not to express these bitter feelings to his mother, and that with a passionate vehemence, which she saw must be permitted to exhaust itself, before any reasonable attempt could be made to calm him.

When mild natures are completely roused, they are more difficult to compose than such as are habitually fiery : perhaps it is, because with them the heart is stung, not the temper ; or, because having no suspicion of themselves, they give way without caution to the sudden

impulse, and are lost in its fierce vortex, before they are aware that they touch its verge.

Be that as it may, the patient and cheering Rupert was certainly transformed into another man for a while, by those accumulated causes for indignation which the present juncture furnished. The personal assault of his mother; the barbarity of tearing an innocent child away, while yet but imperfectly well; the probable foul conduct of his father; and the possible suspicion which might attach to himself, were individually and separately, enough to distract his whole being: their force, thus combined, was beyond human nature to resist.

After repeated exclamations against the perfidy of which he was likely to be the victim in the point dearest to every honest man, his reputation, Rupert's expressions and gestures gradually became less impetuous, and a melancholy gloom took place of the fires which had

darted from his altered countenance. He drew repeated sighs, and cast himself all at once into a seat.

Madame Roselheim now seized the moment for soothing and enlightening him. She had known Rhinegravestein in the brightest day of his honour, and she was firm in her avowed belief, that however ambition, or a guilty preference, or a misguided conscience, might lead him from the path of what he considered his duty in private life, he was incapable of consenting to any act which could stain his reputation in the eyes of the public.

Poor, indeed, she admitted, is the substitution of honour for principle: but though its root be in man's opinion, not like principle, in the law of God, its protecting shade is better than the naked sterility of open baseness; and she who had once loved Rhinegravestein as a model of every thing magnanimous and amiable, could not believe that all the beauty

of his character was defaced, with its sterling value.

She urged this sentiment upon her son, adding, with many a sighing petition to Heaven for pardon if she judged erroneously, or from a rival's prejudice, that she could only lay this dark transaction at the door of Rhinegravestein's present countess: that as she had given no pledge, perhaps it would not be right to condemn her as severely as they must have done her lord; that a mother's impatience and apprehension for an only child might perhaps deserve mercy; that in short, the Franciscan's reserved mode of mentioning her, and the decided tone in which he always spoke of her lord's grateful sentiments towards Julian's friends at Mariendorpt, tended to corroborate her idea that the whole plot was conceived and executed by her, and her emissaries only.

Time would show, Madame Roselheim said, whether she were justified in thus

rather imputing ill to the character she knew no praise of, than fixing it on one she believed excellent still, in parts.

“ If I could think your father capable of such a flagrant act,” she said, in a voice so faint and interrupted, that it seemed scarcely an attempt at utterance, “ that moment would be the last of my life. — I can forgive much against myself — but against you ! — No, no, my son ; I could not survive such an assassination of your peace and honour.”

The deep and solemn affliction of her manner effectually recalled Rupert to himself: and smoothing his ruffled brow with one of those sunny smiles, which opened heaven in his face, he took her hand, acknowledging the culpable rashness of his decision against a parent ; yet confessing, that until the latter's ignorance of the nefarious plan were made as clear to the world, as he now hoped it might be made to himself, he should scarcely know how to lift up his head in

honourable society. To vindicate his own character, was however the first thing he must think of; and he tenderly warned his mother, that she must prepare for his almost immediate departure to the camp, in that intention.

Madame Roselheim had not a wish to urge a single objection; and having succeeded in her aim of pacifying his apprehension of a double disgrace in his own and his father's person, her heart involuntarily reverted to the situation of Julian.

The piercing cries of that loving and terrified innocent, returned upon her sense, as she recalled the moment of his seizure by the fiercest of the ruffians: she imagined his grief and alarm, when he should find himself alone with such wretches; and trembled to think how fatal a turn the frightful business might give to his unsettled health. A single convulsion fit might end his short life at once; or inflict a heavier calamity—

idiotism for life. At the last horrid, yet natural imagination, such a mortal agony appeared on her countenance, and such a death-like cry escaped her, that her son, fearing both were the effects of the blow she had hitherto treated lightly, conjured her, in the name of God, to say what occasioned them; and, wrapping his arm round her, with looks of frantic despair, besought her to answer him.

Madame Roselheim tried to recover herself, and assuring him it was not bodily pain which moved her thus, simply named the real cause. Maddened anew by the certainty that all this suffering came from the same quarter, Rupert flamed afresh, exclaiming vehemently, "They shall dearly account for this!" — then recollecting that his father was implicated in this threat, he drew a deep sigh, and covered his face with his hands.

Madame Roselheim could see by the moisture which penetrated even through

his closed fingers, that her son was shedding tears:—she believed those tears would relieve him; and withdrawing *her* floated eyes from his desolated figure, she leaned her head against his side, in dejected silence.

When Rupert removed his hands from his face after a long interval, he looked at his mother, and was instantly struck by her increased paleness and fainter respiration. “Good Heaven! how am I to leave her!” he exclaimed—then adding in the tenderest tone, “You suffer, dearest mother!—I see you suffer!—the ruffians!”

By a strong effort Madame Roselheim raised her face from his side, where she had hitherto supported it; and assuring him that her head ached less from the blow, than from fatigue of spirits, told him that for once in her life she should be the better for knowing him away from her; and desired him therefore to fix his own hour for departure.

To leave his mother before he had acquired greater certainty as to the slight nature of her hurt, was not possible to Rupert; and after several contradictory resolutions, he decided upon staying out the night, to see how she might feel in the morning: then, if the surgeon continued to pronounce the injury unimportant, he would set forward without delay.

Again, and again, he deplored the absence of Aremberg, to whose calm sense and deep feeling, he could have confided her, as to another son. And from Aremberg's generous friendship, he would have been content to receive for his mother, all that Muhldenau's slender means could not afford; supposing her state might eventually require more expensive, because more skilful advice, than what their village could furnish.

Penetrated to the soul by the certainty of his own limited means, by bitter regret for the loss of Julian, by all the

train of evils likely to follow the present affliction, Rupert's countenance as Meeta re-entered the room on his call, shewed that he believed all his halcyon days were over. He was so pained, indeed, by his own distressful anticipations, that he spoke to her without seeing her.

Meeta felt this, as his eyes passed over her face without looking one ray of tender consciousness: she was transfixed by the observation; and ignorant that the image which engrossed his senses, and barred outward impressions, was the only one she could have pardoned for so excluding hers—the dread of disgrace—she was sensible to a pang of inexpressible anguish.

Rupert had so immediately returned into his own miserable reflections after having called her, that she stood a moment or two before him without speaking or being spoken to. But when she asked him, in faltering accents, whether he thought Madame Roselheim worse, the

sound of her voice at once awoke his heart; and such a light of love and sweetness broke through his clouded eyes, that Meeta forgot they had the moment before, met hers in silent darkness.

He took her hand, and as he pressed it earnestly and fondly in both his, he too, forgot that he had determined never to press that hand so again.

“ I am going to leave my mother, Meeta,” he said, “ do you be every thing to her that I cannot be when far away.”

Meeta neither spoke nor raised her eyes; for like his own, her heart was too much engrossed by regrets and fears for the same objects, to have sufficient strength for the instant mastery of its tenderest impulses. An almost imperceptible return of his hand's pressure, was her sole answer; after which, blushing at her own boldness, she went up to where Madame Roselheim was now sitting, or rather drooping, exhausted by recent exertion, and besought her to go to bed.

Madame Roselheim confessed her want of repose ; and, charging her son not to waste the hours needful for the refreshment of his strength, in vain conversations, or in musings over disagreeable remembrances, obtained his promise that he would go immediately to his chamber.

A silent and fervent embrace testified Rupert's obedience, as he directed his thrilling eyes once more towards Meeta, who directly cast down hers : for though she had not the force to reprove this second glance of undisguised tenderness, she felt that it was her duty to avoid it.

The next morning, having found Madame Roselheim only slightly feverish, the pain in her head abated, and her spirits calmed, Rupert felt relieved from some part of the heavy load which weighed upon his soul. Having one great object in view, the vindication of his own honour, he lost sight of intermediate things, such as time and distance ; saw only the termination of his long journey ;

and thus parted from his mother and Meeta, with a previous occupation of thought, and a deadness to present impressions, which often amazed him to remember in after days.

Graciously did Providence so diminish the sorrow of that moment to them all ! for each individual to whom his presence was happiness, counted the instants till he had left them ; impatient of any delay which might compromise his fair fame, and cover them with despair for having detained him.

Thus, without tears or sighs, did Rupert say farewell to Mariendorpt ; to the house which had been to him as a home ; to the mother he loved beyond his life ; and to her who could not be dearer than that mother, but whose looks, whose tones, whose romantic devotedness, thrilled his whole being with a more transporting sort of tenderness.

Thus did these objects of his love, give him the last embrace, and the last long

look with the same tearless stillness; and it was not until they heard the last sound of his horse's echoing hoofs, (for he travelled partly by land, for the sake of expedition,) that returning into the house, from the door where they had parted with him, they felt the necessity of relieving their oppressed and aching hearts, by floods of tears.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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